
The Ripening of Revolution in the United States

[circa May 20, 1921] †

by Max Bedacht [“James A. Marshall”]

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The originators of the world war, the dominant class in all the belligerent countries, assign to the war the role of bursting the fetters of national exploitation, and by establishing a world dominion to abolish the objectionable competition in the field of international exploitation.

In reality the world war let loose the Social Revolution, and released everywhere the forces of proletarian upheaval. Capitalism everywhere is facing bankruptcy. It is incapable of solving social problems which itself has created, and which have become more acute as a result of the war. The working class is everywhere agitating to seize its patrimony and to cut the gordian knot by proletarian revolution.

Everywhere — and yet not everywhere!

The United States seems to form an exception to all the large capitalist countries.

But this is more apparent than real. Even this colossus of American capitalism stands on the clay feet of a thoroughly disorganized capitalist world economy, and is built upon the slumbering volcano of a discontented working class. The war filled the pockets of the rich and gave the American capitalists the welcome opportunity of drawing wealth out of the misery of the European na-



tions. And yet, though it appears to be brimming with health and full of arrogance, American capitalism is incapable of effecting the return of industries to pre-war conditions without disturbances.

The bankruptcy of the capitalist countries of Europe presses down on it like a heavy load and poisons its very existence. The giant is at a

†- Max Bedacht [“James Marshall”], the representative to the Executive Committee of the Communist International of the United Communist Party of America, was asked to contribute articles to *Pravda* on the American situation on May 15, 1921. This article was probably written shortly thereafter and first published in Russian translation in the pages of *Pravda* before being picked up in the June 17 issue of the little known press review called *Moscow*. The article was then taken from *Moscow* and reprinted again in the August 6 issue of *The Toiler*, a legal English language weekly of the newly unified Communist Party of America.

loss how to face the present crisis. Violence seems to him the only remedy for the growing unrest of the working class. But this violence in accordance with the unavoidable laws of nature generates a power that will destroy it in the end.

The present crisis is extensive and terrible. Millions of workers are out of work. The figure is supposed to be 6-7 million. At any rate no less than 4. These 4 million unemployed form the Army of Reserve with which the American capitalist reckons to cut off the citadels of the workers' economic organizations. Trade unions must be destroyed. The workers must be delivered to the tender mercy of capitalist exploitation.

But even the employed workers themselves swell the ranks of the disaffected. The decreased wages do not in any way correspond to the exorbitant prices of the necessities of life. The implacable pressure of the economic conditions is now welding the workers together, though only yesterday their organizations were destroyed. If hungry when employed, they will be less afraid of starving when on strike. Fights break out sporadically and even if the jobs of the strikers are snatched by blacklegs recruited from the army of the unemployed, these latter will be forced to strike and fight tomorrow or the day after.

Strikes increase in size and volume. They precipitate the crisis by throwing the capitalist economy out of gear. Capitalism in spite of all its sham power is aware that it is on its last legs. But this sham power is being exercised with absolute ruthlessness. To the scourge of hunger are added machine guns, hand grenades, police truncheons, and prisons.

These tactics instead of bringing the work-

ers to their knees only teach them to adopt new fighting methods. The interference of the state does not solve the problem which had driven the workers into the fray. It only assumed a different form. And, just as formerly, the worker was seeking to solve it in the old form of strikes, backed by the economic fighting methods, so is he now seeking its solution in the new form of political fighting, and in the final revolutionary struggle. There is no other way out for the working class. Its vital interests force it to fight the employers and since the capitalist state uses its power only to help the employers, the working class will finally be compelled — also in defence of its vital interests — to oppose the capitalist state.

This development in the American class struggle is not so manifest and rapid that it would be nothing short of unpardonable pessimism to strike off the United States in considering the possibilities of world revolution. Hardly 400 years have elapsed since the territory now comprising the United States entered the ranks of those states which were on the path of capitalist progress. This country has covered this period with seven league strides and has left behind most of its older competitors, though they were a thousand years older. This country will not lag behind in the revolutionary development either. It will destroy capitalism more thoroughly and rapidly, it will, after a sharp but decisive revolutionary struggle in the not far distant future, pave the way to communist development, will leave behind its elder revolutionary brethren thanks to its economic ripeness, and, instead of being the bogey of the world revolution, will become its ministering angel.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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