Registered at the General Post Office as a Newspaper.

THE INTERNATIONAL

THE ORGAN OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST LEAGUE (S.A.)

P.O. Box 4179. Neppe's Buildings, 54, Fox Street, Johannesburg. 'Phone 6035.

No. 160 FRIDAY, NOV 15, 1918. PRICE 1d. WEEKLY.

From Strength to Strength

We live in red-letter days. The first birthday of Russian freedom marks also the end of the world slaughter, the foundation of revolutionary Germany and a Socialist peace: and each day brings news of fresh advances elsewhere. It never rains but it pours. We used to speak of what "would" happen under Socialism. To-day it is what "will" happen, aye, what is happening and has happened already. We need not be too fastidious over the personnel which includes the Scheidemanns whom Lenin refused to meet at Stockholm and excludes the Liebknechts, even "warning the people against Bolshevism." So it was in Russia—for eight months. Disillusionment, rapid as it has been, is not the work of a day. Nor has it been effected by brutal force of arms. The very campaign of lies practised on the workers becomes, once detected, its own best refutation, and the resulting conversion, though still very far from complete, can be trusted. Bloodshed there will be yet—outrage and atrocity it is called when the Socialists are winning. But the workers of the revolutionary countries will never again shed their blood for their bosses.

Whose turn next? What irony if it were Belgium's! After that, let it but be one of the "triumphant" greater powers, and the final goal is in sight. When will Britain rise? Lloyd George sees the "danger." In the very banqueting hall of victory he trembles. "The next few years are charged with the fate of Britain and her empire, and I appeal solemnly in this first hour—let us banish faction until the Empire has been thoroughly saved." Yes, the role of Bismarck against the Commune may after all be denied to them, forbid fraternising as they may. To-day the conquerors of the world are about to be weighed, like the conquered, in the balance. To-morrow they too will be found wanting. Hail to the oncoming Social Revolution in Britain and her Colonies! Vive l'Internationale!

A Socialist Africa.

The Capitalist Press is at pains to assure its readers that the Socialist Revolution in the East and Central countries of Europe is a mere product of disappointment at military defeat, and will collapse in due course as other revolutions in those countries during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have collapsed in the past. The "Mail" must have been spending some hours looking up "Revolutions" in the encyclopaedia in its search for thoughts which shall be children to the wish. President Wilson comes forward more than ever as the literary gent with whom the word is father to the thought. His pronouncements are limited by the necessity of turning out an elegant and interesting piece of prose, and the more foggy his ideas the more impressive his output of phrases.

It is true that the struggle for what he calls the "conquest of the world," till now waged between two Capitalist groups, has latterly been transformed into one between capitalism and Socialism. It is true that the ultimate co-operative commonwealth of Socialism must be worldwide, and so long as it is confined only to certain portions of the globe it is still in danger. What these scribes forget, ignore or do not know is that the whole course of social development leads that way in any case, and that the war only acted as a purge in hastening the expulsion of waste and decayed matter — we will make the patriots a present of that excuse for their attitude. This superficial historical research ignores the difference of economic basis between one revolution and another.

The Social Revolution unique.

The "Social Revolution" is not like anything in history books. In them we have become accustomed to read of revolutions which, economically interpreted, have meant that "classes that have conquered power tried to consolidate their acquired position by subjecting the whole of society to their own mode of appropriation"; for "all previous historical movements were movements of minorities, or in the interest of minorities," whereas "the proletarian movement is the conscious movement of the immense majority in the interest of the immense majority"—the proletariat being **"the lowest stratum of existing society"** and **"propertiless."** Further "the proletarians cannot become masters of the productive forces of society without abolishing . . . property in its present form, based on the antagonism of capital and wage labour," "the necessary condition of whose existence is that the great majority of society shall be entirely propertiless."

Finally "the first step in the working class revolution is the raising of the proletariat to the position of ruling class, the victory of Democracy. The proletariat will use its political power to wrest by degrees all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralise all instruments of production in the hands of the State, i.e., of the proletariat organised as the ruling class, and to increase as rapidly as possible the total mass of productive forces. This naturally cannot be accomplished at first except by despotic inroads on the rights of property and on the bourgeois conditions of production. . . . When in the course of development class distinctions have disappeared, and all production is concentrated in the hands of associated individuals . . . an association appears in which the **free development of each** is the condition for the free development of all." "THE PROPERTY QUESTION IS THE FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION OF THE MOVEMENT."

"No Socialism for Africa."

These grand old organ fugues of the Communist Manifesto are the most modern thing in sociology to-day. The "Mail" knoweth them not, but they are being enacted in Europe before our eyes. People as unlike as the Slavs and the Teutons, who Capitalism tells us must be secular race-enemies, are found treading the same path, and no doubt in concert, under the Red Flag; and every new conquest of the Revolution makes easier its further progress. Who then can say "Socialism is not for my Country"? It may well be that the movement is destined sooner than we have dared to think to invade even this land of seemingly insuperable obstacles to its success, that has suffered less from war than from influenza. "What form will it take?" is the question. Certain it is that it will require all the wisdom and resource of those who are ready to welcome it, and on whom the responsibility of "seeing it through" will fall, to determine the principles and methods according to which this composite community of South Africa can best resolve itself into a co-operative commonwealth.

Our Motley Proletariat.

The "International" need not again labour the obvious fact that the "immense majority" of the South African proletariat consists of members of the Bantu races, although not all members of those races are proletarian; and that many white wage earners, if not actually property owners, at any rate aspire to the status, and absorb the ideology, of the petty bourgeois. Moreover, in the case of a largely rural population like that of Russia or South Africa, "the proletariat" in practice includes not only the industrial workers but the small peasants or landless agriculturists, the majority of whom in this country are again non-European. All these elements, irrespective of colour, go to make up the "ruling class" whose "dictatorship" and "mastery of the productive forces of society" is "the first step in the working class Revolution." A "hard saying" indeed, whereat many "go away sorrowful, having great possessions." It is this stumbling block that makes the Socialist problem seem so insoluble, or the Socialist movement so difficult, in this country. Yet any labour movement that ignores or shirks it is a sham. Any revolution that still leaves a "lowest stratum" or subject class, hewers of wood and drawers of water for the rest, is only another history-book revolution; and any prejudice that would exclude such a class from equal participation, not indeed in a capitalist but in a **Communist** society, is at bottom not even of a racial but of a bourgeois class nature, perpetuating the antagon-

ism on which existing society is based. In the last resort, it is to the inspiration and example of successful "forward movements" in other lands, to the march of triumphant world-socialism itself, that we must look to dispel and dissolve all such apparent difficulties in the path.

South Africa's Problem.

Now in South Africa, though the masses have developed a considerable degree of consciousness of the increasing legal and social disabilities of the native races as such, they cannot truly be said as yet to have attained **class-consciousness**, still less are they organised as a class for the social revolution. A little is being done in this direction, but the field is practically still uncultivated. The like applies to the "poor white" in town or country no less than to the native. A large amount of propaganda and organisation among these elements is obviously needed, as it was needed in Russia, to prepare them to take their place both in the revolution itself and in the "administration of things" under the Socialist Commonwealth to come. This backward or unequal development in the proletariat makes the movement here more complicated than in a European country on the one hand or a purely Asiatic or native country on the other; although, as the "International" has before remarked, we become thereby the bridge between the European and the non-European workers of the world, whom capitalism will try to keep divided and play off against each other, meanwhile using the cheaper labour as a scab army.

Self-Help.

The proletarian revolution cannot be effected through attorneys or by proxy. The "lowest stratum" itself must raise itself. It must force admission into industrial organisation by thrusting sufficient spokesmen at least of the unskilled workers into mine, shop or works committees and the like. On the wider rural field, it should be comparatively easy to generate the habit of frequent meeting in free, unofficial district councils or pitsos ("Soviets" is already becoming too slangy) of "workers and peasants," all over the country (although as regards natives no doubt, notwithstanding the Moffat report, the chief business of the Native Affairs Department will continue to be by fair means or foul to thwart such meetings); and a congress of delegates from such councils should soon replace the present inefficient and unrepresentative Native Congress. In fact, the principles of the new Russian Constitution could probably be drawn upon to a surprising extent in this respect without waiting for such councils to acquire official status, which latter could however probably be extorted even under the present regime if necessary.

The Responsibility of the "Intelligentsia."

Nevertheless, the necessity for action may be upon us before a working degree of co-operation between all sections of the proletariat (including the necessary facility of understanding each other's language) is reached. In the meantime, the experience, ability and character required to carry through the workers' revolution are found only among a minority consisting largely although not entirely of Europeans. Hitherto the white workers have fought for themselves as whites; but it must be becoming clear to them, that as a small minority they have no hope of real success; that if hired labour and the wage system are to go they must go for all concerned; and that under a system providing plenty for all there is no reason why one should not receive as much as another, no matter whether one hews the wood or draws the water—so much so that even if Socialism found General Botha washing dishes and Mr. Macfie doing sanitary service, they would still enjoy its benefits at least as amply as the next man. It follows then that the only useful activity of the minority in the movement must be an activity on behalf of the whole "lowest stratum": that as long as their backward fellow workers remain backward, they too are kept back; and that in the identical common interest of all workers their job is to increase the knowledge, organisation and power of their "weaker brethren" until co-operation with them in the common cause becomes as easy as it is supposed to be between artisans all earning the same pay. Just as the "intelligentsia" or professional classes of Russia have had to choose between opposing the working class movement outright or taking loyal service as experts, civil servants, and the like under the proletarian flag, so our "superior" workers, if true to the cause of their class, will find themselves more and more driven to espouse the cause of the bottom dog as such until the development of the natives and "poor whites" has very much advanced. So far as they serve as leaders (though the movement has not succeeded until leaders can be dispensed with) they will be charged with a trust solely to serve the interest of their beneficiaries. Like the foremen in Socialist Russia, they will be appointed, instructed and dismissed by their clients, the whole proletariat, white and black; whose duty in turn it will be to watch very closely against any betrayal (the temptation to which will be strong) of their trust.

The Thick of the Fight.

If the movement progresses as we hope and expect it will in other countries (and especially if it invades countries like Italy and France, members of the "victorious" group) we may reckon that the financial and cosmopolitan section of the local capitalist class will surrender in sympathy with its oversea principals without overmuch ado. It is with the agrarian section, whose "Nationalist Party" was formed to counter the incipient Socialist propaganda among the bywoners, that the hottest tussle must be anticipated. The landowners will fight to the last ditch against "despotic inroads on the rights of property and on the bourgeois conditions of production"; and will have support from race-prejudiced elements whose economic interests lie far from theirs; while the proletariat will be mostly unarmed. However, they may have to yield to pressure applied in divers ways that will occur to the reader, such as the railway strike against the Junkers recently adopted in Germany; they will have against them the momentum of an advancing world movement; and so far as they are dependent, e.g., for shipping or supplies, on other countries already socialised, they will have to face a very formidable boycott.

Socialist Production.

Let us push yet further ahead, and suppose that the proletariat has succeeded in asserting itself as the ruling class in South Africa. The gold mining industry, and with it most of the present industrial organisations dependent on it, will, under Socialism, become obsolete: or at least alluvial or outcrop mining, with no phthisis involved, should be sufficient contribution to the world's gold needs. Most manufactures, under universal free exchange of products, will for long be more conveniently carried on elsewhere. The chief "instrument of production" of the country will be the land and the appliances used in connection with the land. Co-operative agriculture and stockraising, not for individual profit but for common use, will no doubt, to begin with at any rate, be the primary business of the organised proletariat of South Africa. Now while in "political" and other matters local Councils should be effective enough, this country is so diversely adapted in different parts to different sorts of production that a complete agricultural survey of it, such as capitalism, from its nature, has never been able to develop, will probably be necessary from the outset, involving large-scale specialisation of activity in say, the Orange River basin, the high veld, the Natal mist belt, the Cape fruit areas, the cotton districts and so on: with railway and irrigation construction on a large scale to match. This, coupled with the backward development of the bywoners and native workers, probably points, at least in the earlier stages, to a degree of State Socialism such as would not be tolerated in Europe, although a Central Administration anywhere must necessarily handle such matters as transport. One incidental result of the new system might also be that segregation between white and black, **ALL MOTIVE OF EXPLOITATION HAVING BEEN ELIMINATED,** would for the first time become feasible, although the present white men's demand for it will meantime probably have disappeared with the rapid advance of education.

Organise Accordingly.

"Guess-work" like all this is very necessary. For it is nowadays held, and recent events have amply confirmed the view, that Labour organisation should as far as possible be designed on lines appropriate to the eventual "taking and holding" of control of production and the means of production. Whatever elaborate systems of industrial unionism may have been evolved therefore to suit the probable direction of the Revolution in other countries, we in this country are both entitled and bound to look first to our own probable future development, and to fashion our propaganda and organisation accordingly. It is high time that all sincerely interested in the Socialist objective, whether they have yet become members of the I.S.L. or not, should get busy thinking out and discussing publicly and privately the various phases of the problem rather than mere formulas appropriate to earlier controversies. If this article, though quite likely wrong-headed, provokes such discussion, it will have served a useful purpose.

S.P.B.