

The Liberal Labour Government in England

By A. Thalheimer.

In a Czech periodical President Masaryk recently drew, for him, a characteristic parallel between the assumption of the government in England by the Labour Party and the death of Lenin, the leader of the Russian Soviet Republic and the Communist International, which took place just about the same time. The policy of Macdonald as the "modern civilized" application of Marxism takes the place of the revolutionary "barbaric" application of Marxism, as it was embodied in Lenin. It is characteristic that the „Vorwärts“ publishes this article by Masaryk without any reservation. The first steps of the Macdonald Government have already shown very clearly to the workers the true meaning of the "civilized Marxist policy" of the Labour Party, while the personal composition of the English Labour Government, in itself, gave the necessary indications as to what was to be expected. The bourgeois press remarked with satisfaction that, with few exceptions, the members of this government come from bourgeois circles, while it contains only one or two one-time workers. As a matter of fact, if one looks at the personal composition of the English Labour Government, it is at once observed that the so-called Labour representatives are for the most part intellectuals of the Fabian type, with Sydney Webb, the father of English Fabianism, at the head, radical bourgeois intellectuals who first found their way to the Labour during the war, or conservative trade union bureaucrats of the type of Thomas, Clynes or Frank Hodges. The "wild men" of the Clyde had to be satisfied with one insignificant post, and now the Liberal and even the Conservative English press is discovering that the Macdonald cabinet is a government of all the talents. One will remember that at the beginning of the formation of the government, a small panic arose in the City and that English capital already began to take flight to safe, reactionary America; but in the meanwhile the panic has been allayed. At the general meetings of the English joint stock companies, reassuring speeches have been held which were directly addressed to British capital, and with all good reason.

Lloyd George and other Liberal leaders have repeatedly pointed out with emphasis for the alleviation of the excitement

of the English bourgeois public, that this Labour Government takes office under such conditions that it cannot under any circumstances be dangerous to the English bourgeoisie. These conditions consist of the fact that the Liberal Government can overthrow the Labour Government any moment that it chooses and that, as a result, this government is compelled to adhere strictly to the line which is dictated to it by the Liberals. In the fullest sense of the word, the Macdonald Government is a Liberal Labour Government. The Times report that one of the Liberal leaders had cynically remarked: "Macdonald governs, but we rule". So it is in fact, and the tactics of the Labour Government are completely determined by this fact. They consist in attempting to defeat the Liberals with their own Liberal election program. The Macdonald Government will carry out the Liberal program, and reckons that if the Liberals should overthrow the Labour Government upon any question of their own program, the election campaign can be carried out with success by the Labour Party against the Liberals.

In this sly calculation, Macdonald and his crowd forget only one thing, and that is that bourgeois policy must in all cases be against the class interests of the proletariat. Naturally, the Liberals are speculating upon this and, as it appears to us, with more right. It seems to be the destiny of reformist labour parties, that they are all compelled to take up immediately a counter-revolutionary stand against the working class. The Ebert-Scheidemann Government, in the Autumn of 1918, began in this way, by taking up an attitude against the wage movement of the workers, and the Macdonald Government begins by having to take up an attitude against the strike of the locomotive engineers. It will have to stand up against a number of such social movements in a short time, such as that of the dock workers and the miners. It is becoming apparent in the case of the English working class, in the same way as it will become apparent in the case of the working class of the whole world, that as soon as it has a measure of political power in its hands, it begins to tug at the chains of its social slavery. The fine liberal and reformist distinction between

political power and social oppression cannot be driven into the heads of the working class. If in the struggle between Capital and Labour the English Labour Government takes the side of Capital, the English working class will take a great step forwards, which step will be against the present Labour Government. If the astute English bourgeoisie is reckoning rightly that the next political move on the political chessboard will be in its favour, they overlook the fact that it is precisely the inevitable disappointment of the English workers over the policy of their Liberal Labour Government that will lead the English working class upon the way of proletarian revolution, that is upon the way of Lenin.

Typical of the character of the Liberal Labour Government are its first steps in foreign policy. One of the most important touchstones for a revolutionary proletarian policy is the attitude towards the colonial peoples. One of the first acts of Macdonald, however, was to notify the Indians that they have nothing to hope from the use of force against British rule. In this way, Macdonald has proved that his government is just as imperialist as any liberal or conservative bourgeois government. The Liberal and Conservative English press were absolutely charmed with this confession of faith of the Labour Government in imperialism. Further, this government denied with the greatest indignation the rumour that it had the intention of discontinuing the development of the harbour of Singapore as a naval base. And finally, the recognition of Soviet Russia by Macdonald is quite openly bound up with the representation of the imperialist interests of the English bourgeoisie. Macdonald in the same way as Lord Curzon wishes the discontinuance of the "propaganda" among the Oriental races which is alleged to proceed from Soviet Russia. Macdonald demands the recognition of the debts which were contracted under the Czar, either to the English state or to private individuals. In form, the policy of Macdonald towards Soviet Russia is much more cautious than that of Curzon, but its contents bear the same character.

In its Continental policy the Macdonald Government has not yet a sure line. It will become apparent that the Macdonald Government, upon which the German Social Democrats as well as a large part of the German bourgeois are setting such hopes, have neither the will nor the strength to risk a break with France. For the English Liberal bourgeoisie, while it does not wish to have a French domination on the continent of Europe, desires just as little a revival of German commerce and industry that could be dangerous to English trade. What is concealed under the pacifist phrases of Macdonald, is the attempt to foil the territorial plans of France, and at the same time to set up, jointly with France and the United States, such an economic and financial control, that the economic development of Germany can be kept within the bounds to be fixed by England and America, who will be the deciding powers. The hopes of the German Social Democratic Party in the aid of the Labour Party will very soon show themselves to be illusions, and the cracks in the Second International, which are at the present moment plastered over by these illusive hopes, will then become all the deeper.

For our Communist Party in England, a period has now begun which offers huge possibilities of development. It will be its task to hasten and to make use of the rising development of the class consciousness of the English proletariat, which will begin in the practical school of the Liberal Labour Government, and this it must do on the basis of superior Communist insight and revolutionary energy. The facts will show that the entry into Power of the Macdonald government will, against the will and knowledge of the English bourgeoisie and its Labour Party, open the way for revolutionary Marxism which is best characterized by the name of Lenin. To the English Liberal Labour Party belongs a short moment of history; tomorrow belongs of history; tomorrow belongs to "Leninism".

It is certain that the proletarian revolution in England will not be an exact copy of the proletarian revolution in Russia, but instead of the characteristics of Macdonald it will bear those of Marx and Lenin. It will be in a much more pronounced degree than the Russian revolution a proletarian revolution and from the very beginning, with England as the centre of a huge world empire, will wear the features of a world revolution, that is, the connection of a proletarian revolution with an agrarian and colonial revolution.