



# Workers' Breadnought

Vol. VII.—No. 7.

SATURDAY, MAY 8th, 1920.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

## IRELAND: The Achilles' Heel of England.

By HERMAN GORTER.

Lenin, in his famous book, "State and Revolution," writes that the Marxist theoreticians in Holland consider the question of the independence of nations too much from the point of view of Holland. Our Russian comrade says, that in our over-arduous endeavour to fight the narrow nationalism of the Dutch bourgeoisie, we keep too much aloof from the whole question of nationalities and nationalism.



**CAPITALISM IS BANKRUPT.**  
If all the rich people gave up their gold they could not fill up the abyss of capitalist bankruptcy.

For once I think our friend absolutely wrong. In the first place because the reason he gives for our attitude is not correct: the bourgeoisie in Holland was not, and is not yet, nationalistic in the sense of wishing to annex other territories. Indeed, it is possibly the only bourgeoisie in Europe which, in spite of the fact that next door to Holland four million Dutch-speaking people—the Flemish in Belgium—has not wished to annex its neighbours. An exceedingly large majority of the Dutch bourgeoisie was, and is to this day, quite indifferent towards the Flemish. Probably not one thousand of the Dutch bourgeoisie wish to be united with them. This is due to many economic and political reasons, one of which is very simple, namely, that Belgium and Flanders also have hitherto been the battlefield of Europe. The Hollanders prefer the battlefield to be outside their frontiers. The reason given by Lenin, therefore, does not exist for us, Dutch Marxists.

There is another point in which I disagreed with Lenin's argument on nationalism. Lenin was of opinion that national independence in all countries and under all circumstances, even under imperialism, was better for the cause of the proletariat than dependence. I agree with him concerning the time before imperialism comes to be developed (the time of Marx, therefore). But I have maintained, and I maintain it yet, that this cannot be said for the time under imperialism, when Capitalism continues, and is not replaced by Communism. Then the question is doubtful, and ought to be examined individually in the case of each country.

If for instance in an independent Hungary, or an independent Austria, or per-

haps another of the independent States into which Austria-Hungary has been divided, English or American capital should obtain the domination, it is greatly to be doubted whether the condition of the proletariat also in regard to the class-struggle would not be far worse than before. For, although the country would then be politically independent, and Lenin's condition obtained, economically the land would be utterly dependent on a foreign nation. The "Rote Fahne" of Vienna expressed the matter thus: "From now on the Austrian workers are the coolies of Allied capital."

The same argument holds good for a number of small nations in the East: the Baltic and Balkan States and Poland. In a little while, Germany itself will perhaps be in the same position, for Anglo-American capital is already purchasing numerous factories, mines, shipping companies, and so on, there.

Banking capital, very powerful now only in the United States and England, strives for dominion over ruined Europe. The national capitalists there will become the employees of the monopolistic capital of England and the United States. Then the struggle of the workers in the countries dominated by British and American capital will not in the first place be directed against their own capitalists, but against those of foreign countries, who live a long way off. This, for the proletariat, is an extremely unfavourable state of affairs. In some cases it may be less favourable to the class-struggle than political dependence.

I have expressed this elsewhere in the following way: Under Imperialism, under the Trusts and the Banking Capital there can be no real independence for the small nations. Either they are a political unity with a big nation, and therefore politically dependent, or they are independent politically, but utterly subjugated economically. AS LONG AS IMPERIALISTIC CAPITALISM PREVAILS, IT IS IMPOSSIBLE to decide whether dependence or independence should be wished for or propagated.

This is all that I have brought forward against Lenin's opinions, and I believe that the present condition of Europe has justified my contention.

This standpoint only holds good, and has only been defended by me, for the period in which IMPERIALISTIC CAPITALISM REMAINS UNSHAKEN.

Should Capitalism become shaken, so that it could be replaced by Socialism, then the entire position changes.

In that case I agree with Lenin completely; then I never even doubted the sagacity of his views.

And this is the case to-day, in all the small States of Europe we have been enumerating, and also in Ireland.

In all the big countries, and also therefore in these smaller ones, Socialism can now be attained. And the claim of Independence for all Nations, doubtful so long as Imperialistic capitalism remains unshaken, now becomes fully justified.

For this independence now becomes a means to weaken the position of all the big

capitalistic nations, and even to cause their downfall.

For no country this is more true than for Ireland. If Ireland should become independent, Great Britain would be struck to the very foundations.

Now therefore it is the duty of all British Communists to demand the complete independence of Ireland, and to take all the measures required to bring it about.

And for the entire Third International this is of the utmost importance. Again England is the rock on which Capitalism is firmly rooted, the bulwark of world-capitalism, the hope of all counter-revolution, and all reaction. But Ireland is the Achilles' heel of England. For the revolution on the European continent, therefore for the world-revolution, it is a vital question that British capital should be hit there.

The gigantic genius of Marx saw all this long ago, and, as it now seems to us, has predicted it for our times. He deals with the question of England and Ireland, and almost completely describes the situation of to-day in the following two passages:

"That country which makes entire nations into its proletarians, which encompasses the whole world with its gigantic arms, that once already has defrayed out of its own funds the cost of a European restoration, in the very heart of which the class-antitheses have developed into the most pronounced and shameless extreme:—that England seems to be the rock against which all revolutionary waves are broken, and which starves the new society already in the maternal womb. England dominates



the world-market. A subversion of the national-economic relations in any country of the European continent, or in the whole of the European continent, would be without England no more than a storm in a glass of water. The relations of industry and commerce within every nation are dominated by their intercourse with other nations, and depend on their relation to the world-market. England, however, dominates the world-market, and the bourgeoisie dominates England."

This applies in an almost magic way to our own times. For now also England, by means of its gigantic transport fleet, can well-nigh starve and strangle the new Socialist society in the maternal womb. And now also, after the fall of German capital, it dominates, though no longer alone, the world-market. Now also Great Britain is the rock of capitalism for Europe.

Marx' observations on Ireland are no less true. He says:

"Ireland is the stronghold of the English landed aristocracy. The exploitation of this country is not only the main source of the national wealth, it forms likewise England's greatest moral strength. It represents, in fact, the domination of England over Ireland. Ireland therefore is the great expedient, by means of which the English aristocracy maintains its domination in England itself. On the other hand, withdraw the English Army and police from Ireland to-morrow, and you will straightway have an agrarian revolution in

Ireland. The fall of the English aristocracy in Ireland, however, needs must imply, and inevitably leads to their overthrow in England. Through this, the primal condition for the proletarian revolution in England, would be fulfilled.

"England, the metropolis of capital, and up to the present day the dominating power in the world-market, is meanwhile the most important country for the workers' revolution. It is moreover the only country where the material conditions for this revolution have been developed to a certain degree of ripeness. The hastening of the social revolution in England, therefore, is the most urgent object of the international workers' association. *The only means of bringing it about more quickly, is to render Ireland independent.* It is therefore the task of the internationals everywhere to expose the conflict between England and Ireland, and to side openly with Ireland in all cases. On the General Council in London rests the special duty of making the English

working-class realise that to them the national emancipation of Ireland is not a question of abstract justice and human sentiments, but the primal stipulation for their own social emancipation."

"There have been changes in Ireland, and England's position to-day is not quite what it was, but that which has been said by Marx about the First International and the British Socialists, applies still, and a hundred times more, to the Third. The Third International must strive by every possible means, to promote the independence of Ireland.

But in the hands of the British workers lies the fate of Ireland. They must follow the example given by Lenin and the Russian Bolsheviks, who, in order to make the revolution in the whole of Russia, demanded the independence of Finland, Poland and the Baltic States.

The attitude of the British workers with regard to Ireland is the barometer for the British revolution.

## MAY LABOUR DAY IN LONDON.

It was the biggest Labour Day procession ever seen in London; some people say it took two hours to pass a given point; but there were several processions, and no one seems to have any definite idea as to the numbers who marched in them. So too with the number of people in Hyde Park: no one seems able even to guess how many attended the meeting. Someone says 1,000,000 people were present, but guessing is vague where really vast numbers are concerned, and there is not so much as a hill to view them from. The procession was not beautiful; it was composed for the most part of work-tired people in shabby clothes, and the decorations on the carts were, with some few exceptions, cheap and hastily contrived. It was a workers' pageant got together in a few spare hours.

The resolution adopted by the First of May Committee, which is composed of delegates from Trade Union, Socialist and Labour bodies, was a confused hotch-potch, beginning with a declaration for Socialism and the entire abolition of the capitalist system and sending greetings to the Russian Soviets, it went on to ask for a number of palliative reforms. A resolution proposed by W.S.F. delegates had been mutilated, added to, and remodelled, till hardly a word of the original remained. One of its clauses, expressing adherence to the Third International, and calling on all Socialist and industrial organisations to affiliate to it, remained almost to the last; but the Co-operators insisted on an additional delegate meeting being called, and then secured the deletion of the clause by a narrow majority, on the threat of secession from the demonstration if the clause were retained.

The resolution in its mutilated form was nevertheless a better resolution than that put to the audience at the Albert Hall. We want to know who was responsible for the Albert Hall resolution. It declared for:

1. Free Speech.

2. Free nonsectarian education up to 21 years sustained by public grants to provide maintenance at school or college. (Does that mean for every child?)

3. Industry to be organised on a co-operative basis. The existing industrial co-operative movement shall be secured its proper position as a model upon which industrial organisation may be planned.

(It is intended then, that there shall be co-operative employers and employees, dividends and shareholders in the "New Social Order?")

4. In order to hasten the day when these ideals shall be realised, all workers are urged to organise themselves in Co-operative Societies and Trade Unions to support all Working Class Movements, and to resist the

recruited attempts to impose unfair taxation upon the savings effected by mutual trading in Co-operative Societies, such as the new Corporation Tax proposed in the Budget.

5. All possible steps shall be taken to spread throughout the world feelings of International Brotherhood and Goodwill, which can best be secured by (a) a system of free barter of commodities, on the lines proposed by the Russian Co-operative Societies; (b) by giving support to such bodies as "Save the Children" Committee in its effort to save the lives of children in the Famine areas created by the war; and (c) by the interchange of visits and ideas between the working classes of the world.

It certainly seems ludicrous to mix up a petty-fogging thing like the corporations tax with the future Co-operative Commonwealth. A resolution is positively reactionary, however, which states that international brotherhood and goodwill can best be secured "by following the lead of the counter-revolutionary Russian Co-operators in London, and by aiding bourgeois charities, like the "Save the Children" fund, which the Allied governments only allow to operate where capitalism is in control.

The speakers at the meeting were not invited to speak to this resolution; it did not appear before the First of May Committee of delegates. Resolutions are of no value except in so far as they mould and define policy and ideas and lead to action.

Speeces played a minor part at the Albert Hall; songs by the audience, the choir, the Templars Quartet, and Miss Carmen Hill took up the greater part of the evening. Only the Co-operative speakers attempted to speak to the resolution, and probably few of the audience took the trouble even to read it. That the comrades present were prepared for something much more drastic, they plainly showed by the things they applauded, and the things of which they were audibly impatient. At the close of the meeting the people had an unauthorised opportunity to vote on a resolution expressing unity with the Russian and German Communists, and the Third International, and pledging themselves to work for the establishment of the Soviets in Britain. When the last speaker, Sylvia Pankhurst, put this resolution to the meeting there was a moment's pause; then a dense mass of hands shot up from every part of the hall.

Probably there were some who refrained, but it appeared that everyone was voting, the speaker was so fully convinced that only a few scattered hands here and there were not upheld, that she did not think it worth while to put the question to the contrary.

The Northern Division led its procession round by the Polish legation to protest against the Polish offensive on Soviet Russia.

## THE TRUTH ABOUT KOSMA MININ.

Last week we told our readers of the Counter-Revolutionaries who, when the Red Army was nearing Vladivostock, sacked the town and robbed the Churches of their gold vessels and precious ornaments. Having done so, they seized an icebreaker ship, forced a crew on board under guns and bayonets, and made off with the stolen goods, melting them down that they might be unrecognisable.

The workers of Archangel gave chase, in another ship, but the robber ship was better armed, and the workers' ship was forced to return.

The robbers' ship made its way to Holland, but the Soviets had telegraphed the truth about the robber ship to the Dutch Government, and the robbers were refused permission to land. In Denmark the same thing happened. In Sweden the robbers were again refused a landing, but allowed to sell their stolen gold.

The robbers then set off for the port of Liverpool, where they were allowed to land, though the kidnapped crew was for a time held prisoner.

Holland, Denmark and Sweden had turned the robbers away, but Britain received them. As a matter of fact, General Miller and other British counter-revolutionaries were on board.

It now appears that this ice-breaker, stolen by the counter-revolutionaries, is no other than the famous "Kosma Minin" which the Norwegian Government and the Soviet Government are appealing to the British Government to send to the relief of 80 starving people who have been ice-bound in the Kara Sea for three months past on the ice-breaker "Salevey Budimirovitch."

The "Kosma Minin" is one of the finest ice-breakers in existence. It has three engines, and is not only fitted for cutting ice, but for taking water ballast aboard, and for breaking ice by weight. This ice-breaker belonged to the Russian Ministry of Commerce under the Czar's régime.

The Norwegian Government had urgently appealed to the British Government for "the loan" (!) of the stolen "Kosma Minin" in order that it may send an expedition to save the starving sailors, for the "Kosma Minin" is said to be the only ship capable of performing the difficult task.

After long delays and refusals the Government, on April 21st, in reply to a Parliamentary question, stated that another ice-breaker, the "Sviatogor," would be sent in a few days and that the "Kosma Minin" "may follow if required."

The reluctance of the Government to send the ship which its friends have stolen back into Russian waters is easy to understand. We learnt from those who have examined the "Kosma Minin" in Liverpool that only the slight repairs are needed and she could sail in a few days. She was thoroughly overhauled only six months ago.