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Mother Earth
If We Must Fight, Let It Be For The Social Revolution
1914

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Society has plunged into a world-wide war, but we Anarchists, we cannot shed tears over its horrors, as do the Socialists and other so-called philanthropists. WE KNOW how industriously those same weepers have been piling up the fuel which made this conflagration certain.

Governments have made this war. The Austrian government ordered its slaves to sweep Servia with fire and sword. The German government snapped its fingers at the four million and odd Socialist voters, and ordered its slaves to invade Belgium. The American government with hypocritical sobs and sighs, ordered its slaves to seize Vera Cruz and slaughter helpless Mexicans. Everywhere it is the same. Everywhere unscrupulous manipulators, who care only for profits, power and place, pull the wires and the people have to dance.

Democratic America and England are not one whit better than is autocratic Russia. Republican France shows us precisely the same picture as does Imperial Germany. Each herds its subjects to the shambles when it suits the purpose of the few. By no possibility

can it be otherwise, for everywhere the masses are entirely helpless. Everywhere power is concentrated in the hands of those who operate the government machine.

Everywhere government is a machine, run by politicians for their own selfish profit. In the hands of those who run it the masses are putty, to be molded as the molders please. Vainly we splutter in our unions. Vainly we form new parties, hold mass meetings and register our useless protests. The machine works on inexorably, caring not one jot.

Who are we, anyhow? Nobodies, for we are helpless. Only money and power talk effectively, and we have neither. Special privilege and monopoly, born of government and protected by government, have stripped us to the skin. We are helpless victims, tied up, trussed, and ready to be roasted whenever rulers are hungry.

Proletariat of the world! Thinking men and women, wherever you may be, we call on you to face the awful picture the world today presents! We bid you note the universal helplessness of the people. That helplessness must be abolished, and we tell you it cannot be done except by overthrowing, root and branch, monopoly and special privilege. We tell you that the individual will remain helpless until these huge governments, with their armies and their navies, their scaffolds and their prisons. and all the rest of their brutal apparatus for the forcible upholding of special privilege, have been abolished, root and branch.

Tears alter nothing. Hysterical protests only exhaust our strength. This is no time for running round distractedly, asking in bewilderment what it means. The fact is so plain that words on it are wasted. The powerful few, for their own private purposes, have drawn the sword and the many are being forced to cut each other's throats.

In letters of blood, which can be read, the lesson has been written, and we must master it. We must grasp one central fact, viz., that to the powerless many the powerful few have given murder

We have no panaceas but intelligence and courage. We do not tell you that you can make another and a better government, for you have been tinkering with that hopeless task for centuries.

We tell you that when you understand the true lesson of this war, you will be fired with the indignation that possesses us; that your indignation will give you courage, and that when intelligence and courage join hands, action will arise spontaneously and the death knell of human slavery will have rung.

Set it ringing, loud and clear! Proclaim to all the sons of men that they were born to be individually free; born to equal opportunity; born to govern themselves by mutual agreement among themselves; born to be brothers and not born to be order-givers or order-takers. Either condition is unworthy of the dignity of man, and what is unworthy of his dignity should be destroyed. Then, only then, we shall have that peace of which it is idle to talk while governments endure.

This war is but the first labor pain of that great social revolution with which the age is pregnant. Let us speed the delivery and make it perfect. To that most holy of all tasks every one of us is called, and to flinch our duty at this greatest of all crises is to play the traitor.

orders, and that the many have had to fill them. We must wipe out this order of business. We must wipe out the governmental condition which begets them.

Socialism, the Socialists, the whole Socialistic philosophy, have fooled us as probably this world was never fooled before. Instead of teaching us to rely on ourselves, and insist individually and collectively on equality of opportunity and a square deal, they have told us that governments are our friends; that we must strengthen them; that we must load them with power; that we must make them run our railroads and our telegraphs; that we must give them the ownership of this and the management of that; that we must work for them in ever larger numbers; that we must look to them for the overthrow of all those special privileges which clothe the few in purple and the multitude in rags. Never was there a more cruel lie. Never were the people lured by fine words and subtle theories more fatally to their own destruction.

It is government that parcels out among the few our priceless heritage, the earth, and defends, with all its military and legal forces, the privilege so granted. It is government that creates the millionaire, and it is government that throws into jail the helpless pauper it has created if he dares to take a crust of bread. It is government that creates and maintains the army of monopolists that ride us and the swarm of official leeches that suck our blood. Every new official is another stone added to that government fortress behind which monopoly and special privilege rest secure, while from it issues a devastating fire on those who question the parasite's right to gorge himself. It is government that orders the peaceful German worker to shoot down the peaceful French worker, with whom he has only interests in common; interests diametrically opposed to those of the heartless few who set the machinery of war in motion.

This is the hour to put on your thinking-cap; to study the appalling picture society presents and to ask yourselves its meaning. When you understand that picture; when you grasp its clear and

simple outlines, you will want immediately to toss the whole business of government to the hell which is its proper destination. You will want to get rid, and instantly, of all these idlers; from Kaiser and Czar to the government clerk who wears out his life copying orders issued by his superiors in the official hierarchy. You will want to sweep away, and instantly, all these governmental props which uphold the house of special privilege. You will want to act, and act effectively. You will see that half-way steps are worse than useless.

Do not deceive yourselves! By playing round this social problem you make things infinitely worse. You have been afraid to tackle it squarely. You have been afraid to say, "I am poor because that other man has got it all. I am powerless because a few have all the power." And above all, and infinitely more important than all else, you have been afraid to say, "That other man has all the wealth and power because our government helps and protects him." That mental cowardice is most unworthy of you.

Today the press is prophesying that, as the result of this war, kings heads will fall and Europe become the Republic this country professes to be. Do not deceive yourselves! War is the grimmest of all realties and the sternest exposer of all shams. This war is showing up the lie that the vote gives power. What did the Kaiser care about the 5,000,000 Socialist votes? What did Diaz care about the constitution of Mexico, which, adopted in 1856, is even more liberal than that under which we live? The Frenchman has to march, when the governmental machine issues its orders, although France is a Republic. England is theoretically a democracy, and nowhere is so much liberty of speech allowed, yet the masses are more helpless there than ever. Everywhere things have been going rapidly from bad to worse; for everywhere we have been building up these omnipotent governmental machines which are our deadly enemies. We have to face this all-important, central fact.

Governments all hang together. They are eager to set the people warring on each other, but they are in deadly fear lest the people

turn and war on them. Therefore, you will notice, our own government machine — from the White House and from City Halls — is issuing exhortations to the public, urging it not to discuss the war; urging it to remember that this country is neutral; urging it to suppress the passion it naturally feels.

Not discuss! Why, this is the one subject that most needs discussion, for never in all history has a lesson so stern been set before us. We MUST master it.

Suppress passion! Why, OUR class is being slaughtered by the ten of thousands, and OUR husbands, sweethearts, brothers and bread-winners, are being wiped out of existence.

It is bad enough that our governments should serve us up as food for cannon. It is bad enough that they should reduce us to helplessness. But to crush our intelligence; to stop our enquiry into a matter so vital to us; to prevent us from finding out the truth and discovering the real cause of the evils that beset us — to attempt this is to be guilty of the most unpardonable of crimes. And this is being done under orders of a professional educator — Woodrow Wilson!

We Anarchists lay this question before you boldly. We say you must discuss and arrive at an understanding of the causes of this war; you must master the true meaning of the tragic picture it shoves into your face. We call on you to bend every energy to the solution of this social problem, which means life and death to all of us. We assert, and with profound conviction, that you will have no permanent security against either the military battlefield or the still more awful battlefield of war for profits until you have done with these governments, for they are the instigators and compellers of all war. We insist that a complete social transformation must take place, and that society must so reorganize itself that the parasites, and the governments which create and defend them, shall be no more.