
An Interview with Hillquit.

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The world is on the brink of important and revolutionary changes. These changes will be bound up with the fortunes of the Socialist movement, and when the tangled snarl of the present international situation unravels, Socialism will no longer be an international movement. It will be a regime.

These are some of the predictions made by Morris Hillquit in his first interview given to the press in more than 14 months. Hillquit had returned to New York the day previously from Saranac Lake, where he had gone for his health.† He was in his home “on probation,” he smilingly said, to see how his cure was succeeding.

While in the Adirondack resort Hillquit kept himself in close touch with the world currents, and he was fully informed on what is going on.

Three Phases of Socialism.

“Socialism today takes three forms,” he said, “that can be named with the names of three countries. They are the Russian, the German, and the English. The Russian form is what has come to be known, quite unscientifically, as Bolshevism. The German form is largely parliamentary, while the English form, while it is political to a degree, is largely industrial.

“These three forms of Socialism were born under differing circumstances. They take different forms, but they are going to come closer and closer together.

“Who would have imagined that the Russian Revolution would come when it came? Who would have imagined that it would come with the *muzhik* for the first time in history, mobilized away from home, and armed; with the land question, the food question,

the labor question, all in need of attention at once?

“The revolution came when it did because of the circumstances of the case, and it took form, not as the revolution had been dreamed for years by the Russian revolutionists, but in an entirely different form. Kerensky could not succeed. He was miserably weak. But Lenin is a great man; in a very real and a very important sense, he is an opportunist, and he met things as he found them.

No Choice in Russia.

“In Russia there is no choice today for Socialists to take. There might have been some years ago. There might be under different circumstances. But today it is either Lenin or Kolchak, and the Socialists of the world are for Lenin. They cannot choose otherwise. They must be for Lenin. It is either some sort of Socialism and a Socialist regime, or a most aggravated form of international piracy, international banditry, and a genuine tsarist reaction.

“That is why the Socialists who do not belong to the Bolshevik faction are rallying around the Soviet government with all their hearts to fight off the forces that threaten it. That is why [Iulii] Martov is trying to bring about a unity between all Socialist groups, to work out a Socialist regime supported by all the Socialists in Russia.

German Situation Different.

“In Germany the situation is different. The workers had factories to go back to, while in Russia they had not. The temper of the people at the time of the

†- Morris Hillquit suffered from tuberculosis. Throughout the critical summer and early fall of 1919, he was removed from active participation in Socialist Party politics, spending his time at a sanitarium in upstate New York.

revolution was not really revolutionary; the revolutionary feeling at the time was largely political.

“But the agitation of the Independents, under the leadership of such people as Hugo Haase, George Ledebour, and others, will change Germany. Either the moderate so-called “Socialist” regime of Ebert and Noske will be driven to take a real Socialist position, or the Independents will supplant them — which is more likely — and become the government. Today even Scheidemann is bitterly attacking Noske. This shows that things are moving in that country.

“But in Germany there is nothing like the Russian situation. No one is assailing Germany from the outside. It is possible for the Socialist of the world to take a strong stand against the dominant majority Socialists and for the Independents without giving aid and comfort to the reactionaries. And that is what the Socialists of the world are doing.

“As for the United States, we are, as usual, the rear guard of the revolutionary workers’ movement. But things are speeded up these days. Fifty years of evolution is encompassed in a year these days. We may expect anything. The mine workers, for example, this very day voted to support Soviet Russia, and to organize an independent Labor Party. The old political alignments are breaking down. They mean nothing any more. The old parties are disintegrating; the workers no longer listen to the old slogans. America is part of the world. American cannot keep out of the world. And within a short time we may find that America will no longer be the rear guard and move into the vanguard of the revolutionary movement.”

Hillquit had little to say about the political situation in the United States today. He was interested, however, in the scrap between the two old parties in the Senate over the League of Nations and the Shantung settlement.

“Of course, Henry Cabot Lodge and Hiram Johnson are not interested in the working class. One is partisan politician of the worst kind, while the other is seeking a Presidential nomination with a passionate

fever. But out of their partisanship much comes.

“It is not often that the workers learn so soon after a great war the history of that war. They are learning now the futility of their terrible sufferings. They are learning now the meaning of their long, their awful travail. They know that it has been for nothing — for less than nothing.

“Lodge is not interested in letting the workers find out these things. But he is interested in putting the Democrats in the wrong, and from this great good results, for which we can thank American partisan politics. The workers can see now, with the anguish still in their hearts, that it has all been for nothing, and for less than nothing. They can see the emptiness of a League of Nations, which is the sole fruit of the war.”

Hillquit will not resume active work at once. He will return to Saranac within two months, and spend a few months there. In the spring and summer he will go to Europe, “as an ambassador, representing myself,” he laughed.

“I haven’t been in Europe in 6 years,” he said, “and I wonder what I’ll find. I imagine that most of my old friends will be either dead or prime ministers. Some will be presidents, and no one lower than a cabinet minister will be considered fit to talk to me.”

Hillquit smiled as he said this, but there was something sad in his smile. He was on a ship bound for Europe on Aug. 1, 1914, bound for the International Socialist Congress, to meet in Paris. News of the outbreak of the war intercepted the ship and he was taken off in the Lower Bay in a tug.

“There will be changes from 1914,” he said. “It will be a sadder world that I shall find — but a world well on the way to Socialism.

“When the Socialist regimes in the nations of Europe get into some sort of entente, some sort of uniformity, the Socialist regime of the world will be in sight. Then there will be an International. But it will not be a hope for the future. It will be a fulfillment. It will be the workers’ regime.”

Edited with a footnote by Tim Davenport.

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