

THE RED FLAG

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A Voice Out of Russia

The following is the concluding portion of an article published in the New York "Dial" of Jan. 2, this year. The first part of the article covers the economic conditions prevailing in Russia and the development of the political situations there up to the Bolsheviks taking control.

We publish this because it is the testimony of a Russian of the "Right Social Revolutionary" wing, which at first bitterly opposed the Bolshevik program, but who, by the logic of events, has been led to ally himself with them as the only constructive political force in Russia:

One way or another, fourteen months ago the power was transferred definitely and finally to the Soviets, with the Bolsheviks as the dominating political power. And thus came their turn to decide the vital questions of war, state, and economic organization. The question of the war they decided to solve immediately. They disclosed the secret treaties showing imperialistic war aims of the Entente, at the same time offering the Allies a general democratic peace. The latter did not even answer! And this fact is of utmost importance, because it arouses serious doubt as to who was betrayed by whom—whether we have betrayed the Allies, or the Allies have betrayed us. Not having received any answer, the Soviet government started pourparlers for a separate peace. It could not possibly have acted differently. It was impossible to wage war further: the army had run away, the railroads had come to a standstill. Nevertheless, when the predatory tendencies of the kaiser became evident, the Soviet government delayed the ratification of the peace treaty and entered into negotiations with the Allies, promising to re-establish the Russian front if the Allies would come to their aid. The Allies did not accept this proposal, the sincerity of which can hardly be doubted. Lenin was obliged to present the Brest-Litovsk peace treaty for ratification to the Congress of Soviets. At that moment, as far as I am concerned, the question as to who betrayed whom was finally understood and decided. Upon presenting the peace treaty for ratification of the congress, Lenin did not deny it was humiliating. But at the same time he insisted that his humiliation was temporary, that the German revolution was not far away. Many did not believe it at that time, but now the German revolution is an accomplished fact.

As far as state organization was concerned, the Soviet government decided that at that time the question could be postponed. Russia was in the throes of a social revolution and in the midst of a struggle with internal and external enemies of the new order. Russia is being built by the plain people, by the peasants—slowly, firmly, and without any definite plan. To foretell into what forms this rebuilding will finally shape is utterly impossible. It can, however, be definitely said that the present rebuilding of Russia is not the last word of the Russian revolution. The word "Soviet" will probably remain with us forever. The Russian people grew fond of it. It was also adopted in Germany, but the meaning attached to this word will be perfected in the future. However, it must be kept in mind that the controversy which split Russian society into two uncompromising camps does not pertain to its meaning. This controversy does not formally touch upon the ideology of the future, but solely concerns the tactics of the present. The adherents of one camp say that

it is first necessary to shape Russia into a definite political form, to establish a permanent government and to let it decide social problems slowly; that it is beyond the strength of the Russian people to accomplish a social and political revolution at the same time; that it is necessary to be satisfied for the present with the political revolution alone, and to bring about the social reforms through evolution. More than that, representatives of this camp insist that our people are young and "dark"; that the time has not arrived for them to decide their own destiny; that the people do not know what they need, but that they, the representatives of the radicals and the Socialist Intelligentsia, do know. Therefore they are the ones to govern the "dark" people, to educate the people to prepare the people for self-government.

The representatives of the opposition camp, on the other hand, insist that their experiences with the first two provisional governments and especially with the third—the Omsk government, which is now dormant in the pocket of Kolchak—is sufficient warning not to repeat mistakes. Their deep conviction is that the Russian people are interested most of all in social reforms and demand these reforms immediately by revolutionary means. Yes, the Russian people are "dark" and uncultured, but they possess a natural common sense. They will acquire their knowledge in the process of reconstruction. Without the Intelligentsia they cannot possibly get along, but they want to select from the latter those who are willing to serve them, and not those who want to govern them against their will. The "darkness" of the Russian masses naturally obstructs the tempo of the Russian revolution. I repeat, Russia is being rebuilt by the peasants—slowly, firmly, and without any definite plan. In this process of rebuilding much has to be broken down. It is also true that it is beyond the power of the Russian people to accomplish both political and social reconstruction. Now the Russian people are busy with the construction of a new social order, and when this shall have been crystallized into definite form, they can begin the political construction of Russia.

It can be foretold already that for the new social conditions new political forms will be required. It may also be predicted that neither the French nor the American clothes will fit the free Russian peasant; it will be necessary to sew special Russian clothes of new cuts. And such work requires time and care: "Measure the cloth seven

times and cut it once," says an old Russian proverb. And history confirms it. Of all the constitutions that were ever written on our planet, the most flexible one has proved to be the Constitution of the United States. Written in 1787, with seventeen amendments, it is alive today. But it must not be forgotten that it was written in 1787, eleven years after the declaration of Independence. Why then ask of Russia that she write her political constitution in definite form only one year after the revolution, a revolution deeper than that of 1776? It may be retorted that social reforms require just as much care; that they also cannot be decided in haste. I perfectly agree with this, but I also understand that the Russian people do not care to wait any longer and do not trust the "masters." No words are strong enough to convince me to the contrary. To back one's arguments with Japanese bayonets and English machine guns is just as criminal, in my opinion, as to assassinate one's own mother. And all the outcries of the interventionists—that this is a "democratic" way of helping Russia—are mere hypocrisy.

When one and one-half years ago the monarchy was overthrown in Russia, I, as well as many others, believed that Russia could not cope with the political revolution, war, and the social revolution at the same time. It was true. We were thrown out of the war, and for this we had to pay with the Brest-Litovsk treaty. But we are confronted with an accomplished fact and we are powerless to turn back the wheel of events. We have lost the war, yet in social progress we have taken tremendous steps ahead. And now the question is—What are we to do? Insist that the social revolution is untimely? Shall we, together with the reactionaries and Czarists, liquidate all the gains of the revolution and assist the French and English in dividing Russia among themselves? Or shall we, with our opponents from the Left, defend Russia and the revolution from her internal and foreign enemies? As far as I am concerned, there can be no question, and that is why, while remaining a Moderate Socialist, I sincerely and conscientiously believe that I must serve Russia under the Soviet banner.

There is still another point to be considered. We may not fully agree with the Soviet government; we may doubt the possibility of realizing some of its ideals, but we can hardly deny the fact that it is consistent and clear in its demands. The opponents of the Soviet government have no platform whatsoever and they cannot have any. They represent the most picturesque conglomerate: side by side with old revolutionists we see former officials of the Czar's police; side by side with noble dreamers we see the faces of criminals; side by side with monarchists we see agitators—all of them are united in their mad desire to overthrow the Soviet government; and the old English diplomats, who are operating behind their backs, have finally realized that such a union is not stable and that it must be replaced by a whip.

And so the Siberian khedive Kolchak has appeared on the horizon. He began his political career with the arrest of the members of the Constituent Assembly, with the reopening of the vodka factories, and with the reintroduction of the Czar's rules against Jews. So the question is as follows: Kolchak, or the Soviets?—The dictatorship of the working people, or the dictatorship of an insignificant

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SOCIALIST PARTY OF CANADA

PROPAGANDA MEETINGS

SUNDAY, FEB. 16

At 8 p.m. Sharp

EMPRESS THEATRE

Corner Gore and Hastings

J. SMITH Speaker

J. LIVINGSTONE Chairman