

# RUSSIAN DEMAGOGY

By Alexander F. Kerensky

Myths, Suspensions, and Deceptions that Befogged the Nation's Reason Deplorable by the Man Who Is Now War Dictator

(This article by Premier Kerensky of Russia appeared originally in the Russian Radical magazine, Northern Notes, in January, 1917. Kerensky wrote the article in reply to one by Mr. Isogoyev, a prominent member of the Cadet party and a noted economist and publicist. Portions dealing with Russian political dissensions preceding the revolution, which would be unintelligible to American readers, have been omitted in the translation.)

I meant to write about the attitude of the imperial duma toward the social and economic questions of war-time—the questions that prove the irreconcilability of the basic social tendencies of the majority of the imperial duma with those of the majority of the bloc—about what must be done immediately for the solution of the gigantic economic crisis in order to prevent a complete economic breakdown. "The Provisions Program" in relation to the bloc of the imperial duma, would be in many respects a very interesting topic to discuss. I meant to write on this, but I read in the December issue of the Russkaya Mysl an article by Mr. Isogoyev, and I feel an urgent need to write something on demagoguery.

Many colored facts of the present sufficiently reveal the spirit of the "new man" or in the ordinary Russians, for whom the war became that "rejuvenating bath" which washed them clean of the sins of 1905 to such an extent that frequently, instead of becoming rejuvenated, they are simply naked people who have reverted to the psychology of the primitive man.

I had occasion to write that the great European war hung the political consciousness of the main part of our society "from Eurone to Asia" and forced it to react against the attitude of the authorities toward the people, in a manner between "a la Moscow" and "a la Tartar." Even the opinion which, according to the Moscow formula, the people were allowed to have was renounced. This retrogression in politics corresponded as one might have expected, to a kind of general backsliding to the primitive in thinking and in world outlook.

A movement in the direction of political and social mythology began. Political "mythmaking" sprang up. The picture of the world became extremely simplified. The capacity for explaining and generalizing on events was lost. A leaning towards personification of events, towards fetishism, became noticeable. For example, the terrible phenomena of

the world conflict, which came as the inevitable consequence of complex political and social causes, were regarded as a conspiracy of the "bad" against the "good"; or were ascribed to the machinations of "one man" who, if he is not Satan himself, is at least one of his "angels."

The severe trials and misfortunes that have fallen to the lot of our native land are considered the results of internal intrigues of the enemy; the defeats and failures that afflict the enemy are attributed to supreme injustice, etc. It seems as if the human intellect, oppressed with the horror and the immediacy of events, has lost its power to perform its function—to explain events—and explanations give way to fairy tales.

It was marked by the first heinousness of a spy hunt, by the first denunciations of "traitors," and by some anti-German feeling among the mixed alien population in the east end; then "it became necessary and important, it was said, to find out who is doing it, directed itself no longer against the enemy, but directly against "traitors" and saboteurs."

So, for a long time, our military successes were sincerely attributed to "reason" to the extent of individual acts, and on this soil blossomed the "dominable column" of a whole hogar to be satisfied with myths, color, and analyzing facts, they began to come to the conclusion—elementary and partial at first—that the cause of the failure lay in the shortage of ammunition and supplies. New blows, another effort of thought, and the causes of events open up deeper and consciousness becomes clarified. And so, slowly, inevitably, there came at last the inevitable conclusion: the entire system is at fault. I purposely take this instance, momentous and clear to all, the instance of the evolution of our failures—an evolution from primitive fetishism to the modern working hypothesis.

But we know very well that besides the naive masses who sincerely saw the "Jew" where they later learned to discern the system, besides those few who did not lose their power of reasoning and fought the calumny from the very beginning—risking, in their turn, accusations about German money—there were also those others of whom Christ said: "Verily I say unto you, it were better for them to fasten a stone to their necks and cast themselves into the sea." There were per-



CUSTOMER: "All these people cultivating ground must make a difference in your takings!" GREEN GROCER: "You're right M'am. Gents on their way 'ome from their allotments buy a lot here." —London Opinion

sons who knew the whole truth of the matter, high priests who smiled to one another and turned the deceptions of the common herd to their own interest. They fed the legend with new "facts," pretending to give them credence. They sailed with the tide, they played upon the instincts of the stupid and exasperated masses—they were practicing demagoguery.

Then came the high cost of living, that symptom of the developing process of disruption of the country's economic structure, and again the "private," the shopkeeper, the speculator were pushed to the front. A wave of pogroms swept the country before the average man learned to discern here, too, the system, not the person.

The Liberals did not have the civic courage to oppose their authority, their convictions, and dignity to do it, not alone because they were preserving the "bloc"—no, they could not do it, because some in their own ranks had the same psychology of fetishism, the same myth-making; they did not wish to lose their authority, to go against the tide; they were afraid to measure forces with the consciousness demagoguery.

How regrettable it is that the cultural temper of very many could not hold out against the ordeal by fire and sword and, after some resistance were carried away by the elemental current of war psychology, terrible at times in its nudity and primitiveness. And how much courage one needed, how much political training and sense of responsibility, not to yield to weakness and adopt the policy of non-resistance to outbursts of "patriotic moods." It was still more

difficult for some to withstand the desire to utilize the people's state of mind; oftentimes it is so easy to escape the consequences of one's own deeds by the timely offering of fitting scapegoats to the disaffected people angered by defeat, to set the perplexed soldier against the alien, the hungry against the first merchant to find a "German" among old comrades.

And this demagogic game of cat and mouse is spreading more and more; the political promoters begin to resort to this method in their utterances, feeding and supporting with their authority the most absurd tales. Nobody, it is true, was surprised when, in November, at the time of the acute conflict between the old regime and the country, Furshevykh (the shared with Markov the leadership of the reactionary Right) made a most demagogic speech in the imperial duma, full of hints at treason by anybody and everybody, which in reality was adroitly intended to divert the people's wrath into channels harmless to the powers that be. In this speech, by the way, was from beginning to end referred, so far as the facts go, by the persons cast under suspicion.) Such utterances of the Right "promoters," who changed only the object of the attacks, not the method, are matters of course, but one is filled with surprise and resentment on behalf of Russian public opinion when such vile demagoguery meets with sympathy and support from the leading Liberal circles.

One is still more perplexed when the utterances and writings of some of the most prominent Liberal leaders began to carry the same flavor of demagoguery. These writers strove to substitute dark hints, calculated to excite the people, for documents and serious proof. Is this an unconscious result of the dark and grave experience of war time, or the influence of the corrupting example, of the convenience of the demagogic method for taking advantage of the common people? Really, it is so simple! Just substitute "German" for "Jewish" brutality, declare all who think otherwise to be "Germanophiles," and when possible to hint that they are traitors—that is the rather simple recipe. The recipe is very old. The "socialists" of the eighties were hounded in the same way; in 1905 Japanese money appeared, etc. But then the effort to explain the labor movement by means of Japanese money called forth general resentment, whereas now, all times more revolutionary then, but now it is patriotism!

This passion for myth making in politics is constantly gaining ground. The old conceptions of the forbidden and the permitted in journalism disappear, and those whose duty it is to direct their powers of understanding toward aiding the people so that the latter also may understand events and get at their real import, themselves become dominated by fear of the mob and introduced to public consciousness. I stopped at Mr. Isogoyev's article. It is so typical, now a days, in this time of beclouded minds and political fortune telling.

Well, God be with him with this Mr. Isogoyev. He does not matter. But now, perhaps, my long preface about demagoguery is clear. I think that if Russian society were not passing through this grave disease, such "literature" would not appear in the columns of the Russkaya Mysl, admittedly a magazine with old social traditions. The sense of proportion became atrophied; the boundaries between the permitted and the forbidden were wiped out; all that was wanted was that the enemies within and without should "get it good and hard" from the Left and from the Right.

Is it not time, gentlemen, to stop and think over what is going on around us? Is it not time to leave these provocations, treasons, dark forces, and so on—which are, after all, naive—and come back to a serious analysis and explanation of events. Really, the time has arrived to put an end to this psychosis and look about us more attentively. Do not all these "provocations" and "conspiracies" and "treasons," etc. remind you after all, of the philosophy of the Moscow beggar women who reduced all of politics, domestic and foreign, to "anti-christ" and England plotting perpetually against Mother Russia. It is time to leave the stuffy atmosphere of grandiose "er's" tales and get out into the fresh air of free human thought. Really, one feels hurt and ashamed at this lingering period of beclouded reason that has seized the greater part of thinking Russian society. —New York Times.



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(By L)

(From Friday's D... CHAPPER... Conspiracy...)

"My dear sister!" inter... with an imitation... the woman's tone that... wrung a smile even from... calm yourself—don't ma... The matter is quite ea... plain—"

"But what—"

"Oh, give us a chance... mit me!" He bowed wi... laugh. "Adèle, this is... Miss Manvers, my... Standish. And now—"... started from her chair... Standish acknowledged... ing syllables—"What... Adèle!"

With the manner of... amazement has paralyzed... of speech, the woman sa... ally into the chair wh... (having thoughtfully w... the hovering waiter) pl... the table, between him... guest. But once seated... if that position were a... break the spell that se... promptly her lips reform... ing syllables—"What... mean?"

Mr. Savage, however... cally gave her no chance... more than the first word... ed, with a rudeness of... fraternal. "And listen to... deeply indebted to Miss... for my very life, in fact... look so blamed incredulo... feely sober. Now will... give me a show?"

And the lady executi... that matched well her lo... resignation, her brother... himself to a terse summ... the sister in a much-pla... and regarding the girl w... more indulgent conten... ing syllables—"What... mean?"

As for that young woma... circumstance that she was... shander didn't in the le... her exercise of that femi... of mentally photographi... ing, and cataloguing the... man's outward aspects in... at the same time, distill... subtle phases of personali... tort of instinct and minu... ing the precipitate.

The result left the la... ghost of suspicion that... as it should be between... together frank with her... She had from the first... the positive likeness betw... Standish and the portrait... rary, even though her ob... the latter had been limit... most casual inspection the... crack of the folding doo... wasn't any excuse for... the identification. The wo... her, like the woman of f... was of the slender, blond... intelligent, neurotic, quick... inclined to suffer spasmod... exaltation of the ego... had not always been pom... every luxury that money h... modern civilization to in... fact was not apparent; s... with such exquisite taste... money can purchase, if it... nate; she carried herself... case of affluence, founde... rock, while her nervous... manifestly due rather to... than to the vice of worri... "And now," Mr. Savage... good enough to explain... dickens you're doing here... being on the way to Bos... eleven ten. I'll be grate... Manvers will quit doubti...

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**BOYS**