

allies. They were captured while fighting bravely in our cause during the first three years of the war. On November 11 they were in rags, barefooted, and subsisting in many camps by eating the bodies of those among them who had died of starvation and disease. Why were the American, the French and the British prisoners of war rescued and the Russians left to perish like rats in a trap? Who dare say that it was not a sacred duty on the part of ourselves and our allies to treat these men as our very own? However, two months had passed before we took up this matter in the way described above, and planned to conduct democratic propaganda and organization among these prisoners while they were being fed and clothed."

The "democratic propaganda" conducted by Mr. Böhn's interesting organization was—to gather the implications of the above paragraph—an effort at systematic recruiting of Russian war prisoners for use in counter-revolutionary offensives against their home government. And the revised armistice terms that were accepted by the German Government on January 16th included provisions that unfortunately were well suited for the purpose of rendering possible a distortion of the announced pretensions behind the transfer of Russian war prisoners from German to Allied control. While the new armistice terms provided for a transfer that is to result in better feeding, housing, and transportation conditions for those unfortunate victims of the world war, the condition after Mr. Böhn's "democratic propaganda" organization got to work seems to be this: feeding, clothing, and housing the Russian workers became mere devices to entice them into counter-revolutionary recruiting offices.

Now, in spite of the clear language of the armistice terms on the subject of the desirability of a humane treatment of the Russian prisoners in Germany, reactionary influences in the councils of the Allied powers have, as Mr. Böhn's article only too clearly shows, made the ostensibly kindly intentions of the revised armistice terms a means of gaining cannon-fodder in the service of reaction in Russia.

Already in January, the Armistice Commission had exposed itself to a possibility of uncharitable interpretation on this question, as is shown by the following news item in a Norwegian daily of January 27th:

"Berlin, January 27.—Alleging that Russian prisoners of war in Germany are being sent home only in order to strengthen the military forces of the Bolsheviks, the Allied representatives of the Armistice Commission demanded last Saturday that the home-sending of Russian war prisoners should stop. The German Commission protested against this order and maintained that such an act would lead to revolts as the Russian prisoners already for some time had been notified of their impending return."

But when this item was printed in the Norwegian daily, the Russian Soviet Government had already learnt of the new clauses in the revised terms and had already protested, in the following interesting message, against any misuse of Russian prisoners for counter-revolutionary purposes. We print in full the protest of the Soviet Government (also taken from a Norwegian newspaper of January 27):

Petrograd, January 22nd. (Official Wireless of the Russian Government). The Russian Soviet Government has sent the following note of protest because of demands made by the Allied powers, that they control matters concerning Russian war prisoners in Germany.

With the greatest astonishment the Russian Soviet Government has learned through wireless dispatches that among the new armistice agreements entered into by the Central Powers and the Allies is a clause which provides that the Allies shall control matters concerning the Russian war prisoners in Germany and their return home. The Russian Government declares that such an agreement has been made without the approval of the Russian Government and even without its knowledge. The care of Russian war prisoners in Germany is the concern of the Russian Government, and the Russian Government alone is competent to assign the administration of this matter to another power. The Russian Soviet Republic was not vanquished by the Allied powers and it has not entered into any agreements with them. The violation of the rights of the Russian Soviet Government therefore is an infamous and villainous act. In as much as the German Government is a party in this international crime against the Russian war prisoners who are found on its territory, we place the entire responsibility for the consequences of such an act on the German Government.

This act on the part of the Allied and German Government causes us all the more anxiety as we have sufficient knowledge of the unscrupulous methods employed by representatives of the Allies who tried to induce Russian war prisoners in Hungary and on the Balkan peninsula to enlist in the White Guards who are fighting against the Russian Republic.

The Russian Soviet Government brands before the whole world this barbarous act on the part of those who are ignoring the most

elementary human feelings and who would compel the returning Russian prisoners of war to fight against their own country.

Likewise we brand before the whole world the abominable practice of these representatives of the Allied powers, who make Russian soldiers who refuse to lend themselves for such purposes, the victims of all kinds of persecutions and atrocities. The Russian Soviet Government is aware of the barbarous crimes which representatives of the Allies have perpetrated against Russian war prisoners on German territory occupied by the Allies. Attempts have been made in those territories as well, to compel Russian war prisoners to fight against the Russian people. For instance, in Cologne, Russian prisoners of war who refused to enlist in the White Guards to be sent against the people of Russia, have been beaten in the prisons with rubber clubs by colored French soldiers and interned in dark cells where they have been kept without food for several days and finally threatened with court-martial and execution.

The barbarous unscrupulousness of the Allied powers who have without cause and without declaration of war invaded Russia, where they have perpetrated a multitude of crimes, is sufficiently known, and these, their new crimes against the Russian war prisoners are to be classed in the system already so well known to us.

If, however, the German Government supports such acts, it is placing itself on the same level as the Allied powers in this respect, and we will have to regard this act of the German Government against Russian war prisoners as a deliberately hostile act against the Russian Soviet Republic. We also declare that German comrades who are in Russia will not in any way be held responsible by us for such acts on the part of the German Government which murdered Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg.

People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs, Chicherin.

Unfortunately, the condition of the Russian prisoners held in Germany has not yet improved in this respect, and it is not surprising to find that the prisoners resent it even to the extent of making riotous demonstrations. Certain persons in the councils of the Allies appear to have learnt too well the lesson of the Imperial German Government in its propaganda methods, and the assignment of foreign (American) officers to conduct the propaganda here mentioned, among the Russian prisoners, will be found noted, with the names of the officers in question, in the "New York Times" of February 17th. We shall probably have occasion to revert to this subject again.

## Scarlet Standard Hoisted

Judging by Swedish newspapers the Allied naval operations against Russia in the Baltic Sea are meeting with obstacles similar to those experienced by the French fleet in Odessa. Stockholm "Politiken" announces that about the middle of May the French fleet had to be taken away from the Baltic because of the refusal of the sailors to fight against their fellow-workers in Russia. Another dispatch in the same paper mentions a similar occurrence on one of the British warships stationed in the Finnish Gulf. In both instances the red flag was raised by the sailors.

Nothing has been reported here about these events. The British censorship still is perfect, especially in respect to news of this character. But the truth will come out somehow, sometime. And the story is always the same. The common sense of the masses of the people actively reacts against the senselessness of the war against Soviet Russia.

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