

IS THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT A TYRANNY?

Much has been said in the press which is hostile to the Russian Soviet Government about the so-called tyrannical methods of that government, and exaggerated accounts are presented of the dictatorial power of the chairman of the Soviet of People's Commissaires, Nikolai Lenin. The truth concerning the Congress of Soviets, as well as the influence of Nikolai Lenin, is given by Arvid Hansen in his new book, "Arbeidernes Rusland" ("The Russia of the Workers," Christiania, 1919;)

"The condition that restricts admission to this Parliament to a certain portion of the nation is of course only temporary. It is presumed that ultimately the entire Russian people will support the ideals of the revolution, and that the very conception of counter-revolution will pass away. Gradually the entire nation will be come a nation of workers, united by one common interest; the permanence of the achievements of the Revolution. As this attitude spreads, the right to a participation in parliamentary work will be extended, until it embraces the entire population. When no one is any longer sabotaging the Revolution, when all recognize their solidarity with the new society—then also, all will be admitted to the legislative body. But as long as the Revolution, the new germinating system, is struggling for its existence, no one can accept the heavy responsibility of placing weapons in the hands of its enemies.

"The myth as to the despotic, dictatorial power of Lenin in Communist Russia has almost become hardened into an 'axiom' in the consciousness of many persons who have not had an opportunity to acquaint themselves with the real constitution of the Soviet Republic, its spirit and its provisions. And yet it is perfectly clear from the wording of the Soviet Constitution, as well as from its application in practice, that the following is the case:

"1. Not Lenin, but the All-Russian Congress of Soviets, which is convoked by the All-Russian Central Executive Committee at least twice a year, is the supreme power and authority in the Russian, Socialist, Federal, Soviet Republic.

"2. This All-Russian Congress elects a Central Executive Committee of not more than 200 members.

"3. This Executive Committee is responsible in every respect to the Congress of Soviets.

"4. Between sessions of the Congress, the Executive Committee is entrusted with the supreme legislative, administrative, and supervisory authority.

"5. The people's Commissaires are appointed by the Central Executive Committee.

"6. The decrees and propositions of the People's Commissaires must be approved by the Executive Committee.

"7. The Executive Committee has the right to pass decrees of its own and to postpone or annul any action of the Soviet of People's Commissaires.

"Although Lenin is the President of the Soviet of People's Commissaires—there being no President of the Soviet Republic as such, and certainly no 'imperator'—and although Lenin, by reason of his political genius, has a very great personal influence, he has no despotic power of any kind, and certainly has never asked for such power. The relations between the People's Commissaires and the All-Russian Central Executive Committee are somewhat like those existing between the Government and the Storting (Parliament) in Norway. Dictatorship in Russia does not signify the absolute power of any individual dictator, but that of a whole class, the class of the producers, carried out, on a democratic basis, against the bourgeoisie and the big landowners.

"A recent editorial article in Izvestya (official organ of the Russian Government) declares: 'We who have been trained in the sublime teaching (Marxism) of Germany's greatest genius, consider

The Fall of the British Pound

(From the "Justice," September 4.)

THE British £1 has not fallen and is in no way changed in its value relation to the U. S. A. gold dollar. As all the newspaper outcry is made on a false basis, it may be worthwhile to explain the real facts of the financial crisis.

The direct statement made in the newspapers that the British £1 is only worth 17s., etc., in American gold dollars is not true. Both coins are of the same relative value that they were before and during the war; both are quantities of gold of which equal weights and fineness are of equal value in the same place, as they always were.

What really has fallen is the value of British accepted bills of exchange in relation to American bills. The evil, so far as it is an evil, is the necessary result of international trade being conducted by private enterprise.

The exchange of goods between this country and America is in reality a national business of the country as a whole. Under a rational system based on the facts the account would be a simple debit and credit affair kept by bookkeepers of average ability who could strike the balance weekly, daily, or hourly, as required, without taking up the valuable time of bankers, bill brokers, and an army of telegraphists and newspaper financial experts.

Capitalist "Working in the Dark."

The capitalist system breaks up the business of each nation into fragments; each fragment in charge of an enterprising person or firm; each firm working for its own personal gain in enmity with the other firms, or, at the best, in the dark as to what the others are doing. The true national nature of the business is proved by the fact that accounts must be balanced and then the private enterprise which has been bested in the gamble begs or bullies its Government to help it out of the mess.

When Mr. Lloyd George says that production all institutions to be provisional, and we know very well that even the Soviet Government is provisional. The government by a Dictatorship of the Proletariat will later yield to a government by the whole Communist Society, in which there shall be no division into classes, and in which a cast-iron dictatorship will therefore be unnecessary."

HALF-A-MILLION IDLE IN GREAT BRITAIN.

The unemployment figures have an important bearing on the problem of the question of production.

If increased output is desired, the plain man would assume at least that all available labor would be employed.

Yet the Board of Trade reports that in the engineering trades alone there were 75,960 workpeople drawing out-of-work pay on July 25 last.

In the shipbuilding trade 12,039 were out of work.

The numbers of workpeople unemployed in the insured trades on the same date were 460,511 men and boys, and 80,373 women and girls, a total of 540,884.

ITALIAN SOCIALIST CONGRESS.

It is safe to forecast, wires a Rome correspondent, that adhesion to the Communist International of Moscow will be voted by a great majority at the next Congress of the Italian Socialists. An intransigent fraction will strongly oppose the participation of the Party in the next elections. It is headed by three members of the present executive—namely, Serrati, Gennari and Bordiga.

is the only remedy, his meaning really is this: "Our bankers and bill brokers have been heavily bested by the American men of the same ilk. If British working men will work harder or for less pay in making goods for export the crisis will pass away." It might pass away, and the same evil would generate again. But even so far the statement is not correct, because the United States is the only country to which we are seriously in debt and is also the only country that does not want our exports to any serious value.

Finance and Statesmanship of No Avail.

First, note the general admission that the only way to balance the account is by labor producing goods for export. Finance and statesmanship are of no avail; only Labor can save the situation. In that case the laborers should see that their business is better managed in future.

The difficulty is not hard to understand if the facts are clearly stated. The theory of capitalism requires each export of goods to be paid for by an import of gold. That is impossible in practice, and therefore bills of exchange are created which are supposed to represent the goods, and in many cases have in fact the bills of lading or warehouse receipts pinned to them. A genuine bill is a kind of pawnticket for goods in transit with this difference—that the pawnbroker has not lent actual money on the goods, but has promised to pay for them on demand or in 60 days, etc., and he is not to get the goods till he does pay. Capitalism—in its financial department—makes these bills into commodities, or ghost-commodities, and buys and sells them for a time as if they were real commodities. The employer-capitalist who supplied the goods gets immediate cash for a bill which only promises cash in, say, three months, and for this advantage he pays away part of his profit. The bills are then bought and sold between brokers and bankers until they become due for settlement.

The "Bill" Process.

Various other evils are grafted on this system; for instance, the bills are renewed—that is, endowed with another 60 days of ghost-commodity life, etc. Bills are also created for which no goods are in existence. Apart from these evils there is the fact that British and American capitalists are creating claims against each other without knowing what the total national claims on each side amount to. The system illustrates the latter half of H. M. Hyndman's saying, "Order in the workshop, anarchy in the market."

As the bills come due for payment they cancel each other in so far as the claims of each country are equal, and the bankers adjust the individual accounts in their books. If the difference is slight—up to a few millions—gold is shipped to pay the deficit. In the meantime the general mass of bills rise and fall in price, and new bills can only be taken into the game accordingly. The capitalists who export and import goods lose, or sell, any control they might have in the matter, and become the creatures of the finance capitalists who have no concern with the production or use of the goods which form the real substance of international trade.

Rate of Exchange Not An Isolated Problem.

International exchange of goods is a relation between two or more national bodies of producers, and as such is capable of simple management. It is now carried on as a series of private adventures. Bankers and bill brokers are nice, intelligent people who would be useful at some kind of productive work, but their present occupation is merely a necessity of a bad system.

The rate of exchange crisis is not an isolated problem and can not be settled by itself; on the contrary, it is part of a great readjustment of international trade which must be considered as a whole.

S. D. F.