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THE MAIN PROBLEM OF OUR DAYS.

By N. LENINE

Mother-Russia:
Thou art poor, and thou art rich
Thou art mighty, and thou art weak.
Nekrassoff.

The history of mankind is today recording one of the greatest and most difficult crises which has an infinite, —we can say without the least exaggeration, world-wide liberating significance. We are turning from war to peace; from war between beasts of prey who are sending to slaughter millions of exploited toilers in order to establish a new system of division of the booty amassed by the strongest robbers,—to a war of the oppressed against the oppressors for the emancipation from the yoke of capitalism; from an abyss of suffering, tortures, hunger and barbarity to the bright future of communist society of universal prosperity and a secure peace. It is not surprising that at the most difficult points of such a crisis when everywhere around us the old order is crumbling and falling apart with an awful tumult and crash, and at the same time a new order is being born in indescribable torments,—it is not surprising that some are getting dizzy, some become victims of despair, and some to escape from the, at times, too bitter reality, taking cover behind beautiful and enchanting phrases.

We were forced, however, to observe most clearly, and to pass through the sharp and painful experience of the most difficult crisis of history which turns the world from imperialism towards communist revolution. In a few days we destroyed one of the oldest, most powerful, barbarous and cruel monarchies. In a few months we passed through a number of stages of compromise with the bourgeoisie and got over the petty bourgeois illusions, in the grip of which other countries have spent decades. In a few weeks we have overthrown the bourgeoisie and crushed her open resistance in civil war. We passed in a victorious and triumphal procession of Bolshevism from one end of an enormous country to the other. We aroused to freedom and independence and the most humble sections of the toiling masses oppressed by czarism and the bourgeoisie. We introduced and firmly established the Soviet republic—a new type of State—ininitely higher and more democratic, than the best of the bourgeois-parliamentary republic. We established the dictatorship of the proletariat, supported by the poorest peasantry, and have inaugurated a comprehensively planned system of socialist reform. We awakened self-confidence and

lit the fire of enthusiasm in the hearts of millions upon millions of workers of all countries. We sent broadcast the clarion call of the international working class revolution. We challenged the imperialistic plunderers of all countries.

And in a few days an imperialistic brigand knocked us down, attacking those who had no arms. He forced us to sign an incredibly oppressive and humiliating peace—a penalty for the daring to break away, even for as short a time as possible, from the iron grip of the imperialistic war. And the more threateningly the spectre of a working class revolution in his own country is rising before the brigand, the more furiously is he oppressing and strangling and tearing Russia to pieces.

We were compelled to sign a "Tilsitz" peace. We must not deceive ourselves. We must have courage to face the unadorned bitter truth. We must size up in full, to the very bottom, the abyss of defeat, partition, enslavement and humiliation into which we have been thrown. The clearer we shall understand this, the firmer, the more hardened and inflexible will become our will for liberation, our desire to rise a new from enslavement to independence, our firm determination to see at all costs, that Russia cease to be poor and weak, that she become truly powerful and abundant.

She can become such, for we still have left sufficient expense and natural resources to supply all and everyone, if not with abundant, at least with sufficient means of subsistence. We have the material in the natural resources, in the supply of human energy, and in the splendid impetus which the creative spirit of the people received through the great revolution to create a really mighty and abundant Russia.

Russia will become such, provided she frees herself of all dejection and phrase-mongering; provided she strains her every nerve and every muscle; provided she comes to understand that salvation is possible only on the road of the international socialist revolution, which we have chosen. To move forward along this road, not becoming dejected in case of defeats, to lay stone after stone, the firm foundation of a socialist society, to work tirelessly to create discipline and self-discipline, to strengthen everywhere organization, order, efficiency, the harmo-

nious cooperation of all the people's forces, universal accounting and control over production and distribution of products—such is the road towards the creation of military power and socialist power.

It is unworthy of a true socialist, if badly defeated, either to deny that fact or to become despondent. It is not true that we have no way out and that we can only choose between a "disgraceful" (from the standpoint of a feudal knight) death, which an oppressive peace is, and a "glorious" death in a hopeless battle. It is not true that we have betrayed our ideals or our friends when we signed the "Tilsitz" peace. We have betrayed nothing and nobody, we have not sanctioned or covered any lie, we have not refused to aid any friend and comrade in misfortune in any way we could, or by any means at our disposal. A commander who leads into the interior the remnants of an army which is defeated or disorganized by a disorderly fight and who, if necessary, protects this retreat by a most oppressive and humiliating peace, is not betraying those parts of the army which he cannot help and which are cut off by the enemy. Such a commander is only doing his duty, he is choosing the only way to save what can still be saved, he is scorning adventures, telling the people the bitter truth, "yielding territory in order to win time," utilizing any, even the shortest, respite in order to reorganize his forces, and to give the army, which is affected by disintegration and demoralization, a chance to rest and to recover.

We have signed a "Tilsitz" peace. When Napoleon I forced Prussia in 1807 to accept the "Tilsitz" peace, the conqueror had defeated all the German armies, occupied the capital and all the large cities, established his police, compelled the conquered to give him auxiliary corps in order to wage new wars of plunder by the conquerors, dismembered Germany, forming an alliance with some of the German States against other German States. And nevertheless, even after such a peace the German people were not subdued; they managed to recover, to rise and to win the right to freedom and independence.

To anyone person willing and able to think the example of the "Tilsitz" peace (which was only one of many oppressive and humiliating treaties forced upon the Germans in that epoch) shows clearly how childish naive is the thought that an oppressive peace is, under all circumstances ruinous, and war the road of valor and salvation. The war epochs teach us that peace has in many cases in history served as a respite to gather strength for new battles. The Peace of Tilsitz was the greatest humiliation of Germany and at the same time a turning point to the greatest national awakening. At that time the historical environment offered only one outlet for this awakening—a bourgeois state. At that time, over a hundred years ago, history

was made by a handful of noblemen and small groups of bourgeois intellectuals, while the masses of workers and peasants were inactive and inert. Owing to this, history at that time could crawl only with awful slowness.

Now capitalism has considerably raised the level of culture in general and of the culture of the masses in particular. The war aroused the masses awakened them by the unheard of horrors and sufferings. The war has given impetus to history and now she is speeding along with the speed of a locomotive. History is now being independently made by millions and tens of millions of people. Capitalism has now become ripe for Socialism.

Thus, if Russia now moves—and it cannot be denied that she does move from a "Tilsitz" peace to national awakening and a great war for the fatherland, the outlet of such an awakening leads not to the bourgeois state but to an international socialist revolution. We are "resistants" since October 25, 1917. We are for the "defense of our fatherland", but the war for the fatherland towards which we are moving is a war for a socialist fatherland, for socialism as a part of the universal army of socialism.

"Hate the Germans, kill them"—such was and remained the slogan of the ordinary bourgeois patriotism. But we will say: "Hate the imperialistic plunderer, hate capitalism, death to capitalism", and at the same time: "Take a lesson from the Germans: Remain faithful to the fraternal union with the German workers. They are late in coming to our aid. We shall win time, we shall await them, they will come to our aid."

operation on the basis of the newest "Yes, take a lesson from the Germans: History moves in zig-zags and in roundabout paths. It so happened that it is the German who alongside with bestial imperialism, is the incarnation of the principles of discipline, organizations, harmonious cooperation on the basis of the newest machine industry and strictest accounting and control.

And this is just what we lack. This is just what we must learn. This is precisely what our great revolution lacks to come from a victorious beginning, through many severe trials, to a victorious end. This is precisely what the Russian Socialist Soviet Republic needs that she may cease to be poor and weak, that she may irreversibly become mighty and prosperous.

We herewith present to our readers a declaration by N. Lenine with reference to the internal problems of the Soviet Republic. It explains much with respect to the causes that made the Brest-Litovsk treaty necessary. We publish this article for the edification of our readers but do not hold ourselves responsible for any of the ideas that are herein presented. The article is translated from "Pravda", Moscow dated April 1918. Ed.