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Trotsky on Russia's Policy

Editor's Note: We have heard the opinion quite often expressed that in the event of an immediate proletarian revolution in Germany the Russian Red Army would at once march into that country. Since there appears to be prevalent considerable conjecture as to such a possibility we reproduce here, from "Russian Information and Review" (published by the Information Department of the Russian Trade Delegation, London, England), what is therein described as "a full summary of the important interview given on September 29 by Trotsky to the American Senator King." Incidentally, a translation from "Isvestia" (Moscow) outlining at greater length the same interview appears in "The Worker" (Chicago, Ill.) November 3rd, 1923.

Russia and Germany.

TO the question by Senator King as to the possibility of the intervention of Russia should revolution occur in Germany, Trotsky replied: We shall not despatch a single Red Army soldier across the boundaries of Soviet Russia unless we are absolutely compelled to do so. Our peasants and our workers would on no account allow our Government to initiate any military action, even if the Government were mad enough to attempt an aggressive policy. Of course, should the German monarchists be victorious, and should they then come to an agreement with the Entente for armed intervention in Russia (this plan has been brought forward more than once by Ludendorff and Hoffmann), then we should certainly fight, and, I hope, victoriously. But I do not think that this will happen. In any case, we certainly should not intervene in any internal civil war. This is surely but too self-evident. We could only intervene by first making war on Poland, and on no account do we desire war. We do not conceal our sympathies with the German working class and with its heroic struggle for freedom, and, to be perfectly frank, I can say that if we could assure victory to the German revolution without risking war we should do everything we could. But we do not wish to engage in any war. Further, war would harm the German revolution. Only that revolution is of a vital and stable character which comes out victorious as the result of its own strength. Particularly is this the case in revolutions made by a great nation. We are wholly on the side of the German people against the predatory, blood-thirsty French imperialism. We are heart and soul with the German working class in its struggle against internal and foreign exploitation. But at the same time we are also heart and soul for peace."

Russia and Poland

Answering a question on the possibility of Russia invading Poland, Trotsky pointed out that in the whole history of Soviet Russia's relations with Poland, Russia had shown a truly "angelic" patience. From the very first, in spite of its agreements, Poland has manifested hostility to Russia, but the latter was only too sensible of the fact that war with Poland would signify a general European conflagration which would result in the wiping out from the face of the earth of the remains of European civilization. "After such a war," continued Trotsky, "Americans would have the melancholy pleasure of visiting Europe in order to study there the last remains of a vanished civilization."

The Red Army.

On the question of the Red Army, Trotsky said: "Certainly we have an army, and we do not consider it at all a bad one. We have 600,000 soldiers. That is not a small army, but in comparison, for

instance, with France or with our nearest neighbour our army is very small. Taking into account our population, our vast territory, our extensive boundaries, our alluring mineral resources, it must be recognised that ours is a very modest army. We have already proposed once and, should America express a wish to support us, we are prepared again to propose the reduction of our army to the minimum necessary to assure internal order, provided that our neighbours were ready to make similar reductions in their armies.

Trotsky then went on to point out the moderate but very solid economic progress achieved by Russia within the last couple of years, and to state that, if for no other reason than that of endangering the possibility of future economic progress, Russia could not indulge in militarist adventures. All she desires to do is to defend herself against attack, and with this end in view the Russian Red Army is being converted into a territorial militia to be used exclusively for defensive purposes.

Russia and Her Debts.

Senator King next asked Trotsky how the Soviet Government could expect to maintain stable trade relations with other countries while she refused to recognise her old debts. To which Trotsky replied: "Our own debts we pay and shall continue to pay, but we have no desire to pay anybody else's debts. Already in December, 1905, the Petrograd Soviet, forestalling evidently the attitude of the present Government, warned foreign Powers and foreign capitalists that the Russian revolution would not recognise debts made by the Tsar, nor would it be responsible for any other assistance granted by foreign capitalists to the Tsarist regime. This may seem unfair, but the planters of the Southern States during the civil war of the 'sixties also considered very unfair the acts of civil war whereby the slave owners were deprived of their property rights to slaves. Nevertheless, it is just thanks to this civil war that America has grown to her present might. . . You ask where is the guarantee that we shall not later refuse to pay our own debts. All I can say is that such an act on our part would be simply suicidal. So long as we desire to maintain trading relations with the rest of the world we are bound in our own interests to carry out our obligations. I can assure you that so long as private property remains in America we shall recognise to the full American investments in Russia."

Russia and America.

After pointing out that all the administrative, fiscal, and other obstacles encountered by foreign capitalists on Russian territory were the result of the absence of proper trading relations between Russia and foreign countries, Trotsky said that Russia, on her side, was ready to give every possible assistance to American firms who were desirous of making really important investments in Russian industry. The advantages would be mutual. "Of course," said Trotsky, "we are very grateful to the American nation for the important assistance it gave to our famine-stricken population, but business relations cannot rest simply on feelings of gratitude." Trotsky went on to point out that the geographical position of the two countries precluded the probability of imperialist rivalry; that he was firmly convinced that the American industrial and commercial world would very soon recognise the importance of the Russian market; that al-

though Russia was actually poorer than Europe, nevertheless, unlike the latter, it was on the upgrade—her markets were extending and she could readily absorb increasing quantities of American products. Big American firms could accelerate Russia's industrial development and at the same time obtain immense profits for themselves. "There is also another important moral (but not sentimental) factor," continued Trotsky, "which facilitates the closer union of the Soviet United States with the United States of America. In our papers and technical journals you will very often meet the phrase 'Americanism' and 'Americanisation' used in a favourable, not in a disparaging sense. The Russians are very eager to learn from the Americans the scientific organisation of industry and of labour, and this forms a moral bond between Russia and America. We know that your business circles are still very hesitant, but we have learnt patience in our struggle with Tsarism. Still more can we wait patiently now, for we know that common sense is on our side."

The New Economic Policy.

In conclusion, Senator King asked Trotsky whether it was probable that the New Economic Policy would be scrapped in the near future for military communism. Trotsky replied: "The New Economic Policy is an absolute necessity for the 90,000,000 of our peasants. If we had in mind to break our own heads, then we should indeed abandon this policy. It is therefore quite unnecessary for us to issue formal assurance and manifestoes in order to prove the stability of the New Economic Policy. The very conditions of our internal life assure the absolute stability of the New Economic Policy."

UNEMPLOYMENT IN FRANCE.

By Georges Levy (Paris).

IT is impossible accurately to determine the number of unemployed in France. The official report on the situation in the labour market, published every Saturday, merely states the number of unemployed in receipt of unemployment benefit. But such benefit is only paid by a section of the municipalities in France. Besides this, the dole is only paid for three months. An out-of-work not in receipt of the dole is not mentioned in the official statistics. No statistics whatever are kept concerning part-timers.

The following fact may give an idea of the difference between the actual number of unemployed and the official statement. In February 1921 there were 47,000 unemployed in the whole of France, according to the official statistics. But at the same time the estimate of unemployment given in the Chamber by the Minister for Labour was a quarter of a million. In March 1921 the official statistics gave the number of unemployed as 91,000. The actual number was estimated at half a million. As a general rule we can assume that the official statistics do not comprise more than a fifth of the real number of unemployed.

There were about half a million unemployed in France before the war, in normal years. In the year 1918, when demobilization began, the number of unemployed in France naturally rose, and totalled 1,160,000. In the course of two years this crisis had been almost completely overcome. In May 1920 there were only 8,000 unemployed receiving the dole.

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