The Soviet, The Terror and Intervention

By M. PHILIPS PRICE

Russian Correspondent of the "Manchester Guardian"

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I. The Soviet is the Political Organization of the Working-Class.

In his opening speech, at the Russian Congress of Economy, which was held last May, Lenin declared that the political power of the future will not be in the hands of Parliaments which are chosen according to arbitrarily determined geographical electoral units, but in the hands of Congresses chosen on an industrial basis. This statement partly explains why the most moderate Socialistic groups in Russia, such as the Menshevik internationalists and the Novaya Zhizn group, refused after the November revolution to enter the government, giving as a reason for this refusal, the fact that its policy was not a Socialistic, but an anarcho-syndicalistic policy. There is a modicum of truth in this claim. For one of the first ordinances of the Bolshevik government—the decree concerning workers' control of industry—was understood by the workers to mean that they should take over the factories of a district, and continue operating them without regard to the workers of their districts. Of course, the object of this ordinance, was to put an end effectively to the sabotage and the war profits of the profiteers, but its effect was that the worker did not seek to safeguard his interests by appealing to a central state authority, but appealed instead to his own special industry or group of industries. The consequence for a number of months was chaotic. As soon as it was at all possible to create a government apparatus, the leaders of the Bolsheviks began to combat these anarchistic anti-social tendencies of certain sections of the Russian urban workers. But then the question arose: What should be the nature of the new central state authority; in what form should the new organization of industry be set up; and finally, what was to be the relation of the state authority to the industrial syndicates? By January 1st, 1919,
it had become clear that the Bolshevik leaders, although they were determined to put an end to the industrial anarchy arising from lack of a central authority, were nevertheless by no means ready to magnify the centralized state. Their first act was to attack the state as an institution supporting the social system of private capital. This involved a destruction of the political and economic organization which had created the capitalistic system, before they could lay the foundations for a new order. They appear gradually to have arrived at the understanding that the new state in its first stages must consist of two distinct organizations, a political organization developing into a weapon for the protection of the working-class from external and internal foes; and an economic organization, the tool for the creation of a new industrial order. These two organizations of the public service should have to work hand in hand as long as dangers threatening from external imperialism or internal counter-revolution, had not yet disappeared. Once the latter was realized, the political organization for defense would gradually cease its activities, and the economic organization would exercise supreme control over the new state. The political organization is known as the Soviet system. The present-day Soviets in Russia have nothing in common, in the matter of their composition, with the Parliamentary government system existing in capitalistic countries. The highest legislative body in the Republic is the Central Executive Committee. This authority is, to be sure, similar to a Parliament, in that it is based on geographical regions, the so-called electoral districts, but it is nevertheless composed of representatives exclusively chosen by the industrial syndicates within these regions. The law of the republic provides that only such persons may vote as obtain their livelihood by their own physical or mental labor. Everyone must, therefore, before he can vote at all, become a member of some guild, or working-class organization, which will certify that he is a proletarian in good faith. In the villages, the committees of the poorest peasants certify that the peasant is not exploiting the labor power of another man, and that he cultivates his land himself. In the cities, the guilds or unions are the authorities which grant to the laborers the right to vote for the Soviet. In practice this amounts to the fact that the Central Political authority of the Republic is chosen by bodies of the people who are united by a common economic interest.
The leaders of the Bolsheviki maintain that this system of government is superior to the parliamentary system of government. The reasons which they adduce for this, are in brief the following:

In the first place, it is clear that the Soviet government represents the only practical way of realizing the ideal that no person shall enjoy the rights of citizenship who does not earn his daily bread by his own labor. In the second place, this Soviet government system makes it certain that only the best organized and politically conscious section of society may participate, and all elements are eliminated which, even though they may not themselves be outright parasites, may nevertheless be in the service of parasites.

In this connection defense is offered for the theory that progress is the work of highly organized minorities, that the masses of the population under the prevailing system of society live on with the indifference of slaves, and that, therefore, those social strata of society which are interested in the maintenance of the capitalist system naturally invented the parliamentary system, with all its formalities, in order to support their privileges. Instead of being driven to the ballot box by some agent of a capitalist political party, an indifferent voter, the voter of the future must join a workers' organization, which will automatically bestow upon him the right to vote for members of the Provincial Soviet. He is thus forced to become a class-conscious proletarian. The right to vote is granted to him, not in charity, but he claims it as the right of a laboring citizen. In the third place it is maintained that by the creation of a Central Legislative body chosen by workers' organizations, the latter are enabled to send as delegates men who are directly connected with industry, who know the needs of the workers, and who may at any time be recalled, or re-elected. Thus the Central Executive Committee is a body which represents the workers' organizations, with which it is in constant contact. This system is quite different from Parliamentarism, which is based on the election of delegates from election districts, containing every possible class of people. The members from each election district cannot possibly represent the interests of all the thousands of economic groups contained in it. Increase the area of the geographical electoral districts, and limit the right to vote to such persons
only as are organized in economic bodies, and you will then im-
mediately have a legislative representation faithfully reflecting
the political interests of the working masses.

Governed by considerations such as these, the leaders of the
Bolsheviks, in the months that followed the November revolu-
tion, created the Soviets, a Central Political body, erected over a
loose system of decentralized economic organizations. The task
of the Soviets consists in defending the Republic against external
and internal enemies, forming a frontier guard, maintaining
connections with foreign capitalistic states, signing treaties, and
controlling foreign policies.

II. The Economic Organisation of the Working Class.

Side by side with the political Soviets, which are a weapon
for the defense of the Republic, a central economic organization
has gradually arisen, which aids in the creation of a new social
order. This organization also has its roots in the unions and
syndicates of the organized workers, and is expressed through
two organs: the Central Trade Union, and the Soviet of National
Economy. Let us first take up the Central Trade Union. The
decree on workers' control, which was entrusted to this union,
placed great industrial power in the hands of the foremen's
committees, which were formed during the Kerensky period of
the revolution in every industry in northern and central Rus-
sia. Like most of the bodies that arise overnight, they were
the consequence of a protest against an inadequacy in the body
politic, in this case the old trade union. Under Czarism, about
three hundred thousand workers had been organized in these
bodies, but they were for the most part craft organizations, and
were much favored by the police, for they tended to split the
ranks of the proletariat, and prevent a united revolutionary
action. The Bolshevik leaders therefore undertook to extend
the organization of foremen and, through this organization, to
absorb the old craft organizations. We must admit that this
worked beautifully, for by the summer of 1918 three million
urban proletarians in Russia had been organized within the great
industrial unions, and every trace of the old craft organizations
had disappeared. The workers were now organized exclusively
by industries. A wood-worker or metal-worker, working in the
metal industries, is not a member of the wood-workers' union, or of the metal-workers' union but of the metallurgical union. If he passes into the transportation industry, the rights and claims which he has acquired in his own union will accompany him on entering the new organization. Throughout Soviet Russia, there now exist gigantic industrial unions, such as the metallurgical union, the transport workers' union, the textile, the leather-workers, the carpenters, the miners, in addition to countless other unions. Every union elects its representatives to the All-Russian Executive of Unions, which has its seat at Moscow. This body is similar to the British Trade Union Congress, but, instead of passing resolutions which are thrown into the waste-paper basket by the factory owners, it automatically acquires in the Soviet state, a position of an administrator of all the international affairs of the nationalized industries, and a surprising influence over all industries not yet nationalized. Here on the ruins of feudalism, was written the Magna Carta of Russian labor. Here sat the numerous commissions chosen by the workers through their formen's committees. A committee determines the amounts and the scale of salaries, another committee divides the workers of each industry into foodstuff categories, determining the rationing of the workers; a third committee takes up the insurance of the workers against sickness and unemployment; another is concerned with cultural work during off-hours; another with recreational activities, etc. At present, each union has its own funds. A member of a union can have his paid-up investment transferred to another union. It is planned, however, to unite in the near future the financial resources of all the unions.

Thus the All-Russian Union of Trades confirms, in its organization on an industrial basis, the syndicalist theory in every respect that touches the internal administration of industry. In order to eliminate the anarchy prevalent in capitalistic countries, which anarchy consists in an actual throat-cutting performed by the industries engaged in necessary competition, the leaders of the Bolsheviks created a further body to regulate the external relations between the various industries, and to co-ordinate the entire life of the country. This body is the Soviet of National Economy. In the first few weeks of last year this body had only an advisory function, but in the Spring there arose the necessity
of bestowing upon it also an executive authority. It was then incorporated with the Soviet of People's Commissaires, which is the cabinet, and which carries out the political activities of the Soviet system. Gradually it extended its functions and took over the control over various Commissariats which were hitherto considered as falling under the political sphere. The Supreme Soviet of National Economy is considered by the theoreticians of the revolution as the nerve center of the future Socialistic state. In the meantime, however, it is placed on an equality with the political executive organs, although it has economic functions to exercise. It is subject to the supreme control of the Executive Committee of the Central Soviet.

The Supreme Soviet of National Economy will presumably, after the external danger is passed, and the normal development of the revolution is assured, take over functions similar to those of a huge American trust, whose task will consist in the purchase of raw materials for the entire country, distribution of orders to the various factories, the determination of the volume of production, and the allotment of the finished products to the sales organizations. But it has another control over the internal conditions of industries, which, as has been pointed out above, are in the hands of the workers' organizations or unions. At present this Soviet is still somewhat bureaucratically constructed. In its Central Committee there are technical specialists and some politicians, who were sent by the Executive Committee of the Central Soviet. The Supreme Soviet of National Economy, as to its composition and functions, represents a reaction which set in during the summer of the past year—namely a reaction against the syndicalist tendencies toward industrial autonomy and in favor of an increased centralization. The chief advocate of this view is Lenin who, in his pamphlet "The Problem of the Authority of the Soviets," favored an approximation to a more dogmatic state Socialism, and organized a counter-weight to the Syndicalist development which had been very strong since the Spring of the past year.

From the above we may see, that an extremely interesting experiment in social reconstruction, the consequence of the awakening due to the revolution, was made last year. The fertile brains of the Bolshevik leaders succeeded in creating the foundations for a state system which reconciles the Socialist theory of
political centralization with the syndicalist theory of industrial autonomy. The war forced upon the Republic by the Allies resulted in strengthening the elements that advocated centralization, who, in view of the external danger, were enabled to prove the necessity of a disciplined army and of a mobilization of industry. At the same time, however, this necessity has not been able to prevent the organization of Society in villages and factories, politically as well as economically, on a strictly Syndicalistic basis. It may be predicted that this development will find still further application as soon as the external danger is passed.

Red and White Terror in Russia

In countries which are ruled by the capitalistic system, persons who are found guilty of high treason or of conspiracy against the state are sentenced either to the death penalty, or at least to a long term of imprisonment. This principle was applied with great severity by the English government against the celebrated Irish revolutionary, Sir Roger Casement. Almost every capitalistic state applied the death penalty during the war, in order to defend itself against its internal enemies. The United States of America did not hesitate to impose the frightful punishment of ten to twenty years' imprisonment upon Socialists whose offense consisted in that they were so bold as to raise their voices in protest against the slaughter of the working-classes of the world in a war that was calculated to enrich the possessing classes.

It cannot be said that from their standpoint these governments acted wrongly. The possessing classes of these countries know very well that the principal weapon with which they can defend their economic and social privileges is militarism. The institution of militarism transforms the workers into slaves, and forces them to adapt themselves to the existing order of society. In order to keep them in their condition of slavery they are subject to a specific propagandist method, the object of which is to get them to hate the slaves of other countries. This production of hatred proceeds hand in hand with a so-called love that is supposed to be infused by “patriotism.” This “Pseudo-Eros”, is generously exploited by the capitalists of all lands.
Hitherto we have known but one social order on earth, namely the state which is controlled by the possessing classes. Consequently, treason under such an order of society would be the word used to designate such acts as tend through propaganda to undermine the patriotic hypnotism which places the possessing classes in the position from which they can control the workers. But now, in the eastern part of Europe, a new form of state has entered the arena. In Russia the system of the Soviet government grants political power only to those who draw the means for their sustenance from their own labor. In that country the ruling classes are the working classes. Therefore patriotism there means devotion to the idea that the workers of all the world are members of one great family, and are united with one another by a common interest. It is of course clear, that so tremendous a transformation cannot take place without first passing through a period in which the expropriated classes will fight savagely in order to re-conquer their privileges. And just as the possessing classes in England and America are now throwing into jail, shooting, and hanging those leaders of the working-class who resist the old order, the Soviet government of Russia is similarly forced to take severe measures against those members of the former possessing classes who refuse to accept the new social order. When, therefore, the capitalists utter the cry of "Terror" against the Soviet government, they are protesting against the very methods of class-struggle that are applied by them also. One may, as do the Tolstoyans and the fatalists, reject any social theory which defends its moral laws by physical force, but it is a pinnacle of hypocrisy for people who accept measures of repression against Socialists and Internationalists in capitalistic countries, to protest against the same measures when they are undertaken by Socialists and Internationalists against their former oppressors.

In the summer of last year, the Soviet government of Russia was at a critical point. The Russian bourgeoisie, after the November revolution, attempted to fight its class opponents by sabotage. Great sums of money were withdrawn from the banks, in order to support the families of those who refused to work, in order thus to bring the industrial mechanism of the country to a stand-still. But the socialization of the banks and the gradual emergence of a technical personnel devoted to the Soviet government nullified this sabotage, and forced the Russian
bourgeoisie into a policy of direct counter-revolutionary action. It is a fact which must be borne constantly in mind, that the Soviet government did not make use of any hostile measures against the class foes, until the latter themselves had begun to apply terroristic methods. And furthermore, even these measures did not provide for a death penalty until it was clear that the officials and agents of the Entente in Russia were undertaking to give official assistance and encouragement to armed insurrections and revolts against the Republic. The investigation conducted by the revolutionary tribunal in Moscow, in November last year, proved that in the summer of 1918, there existed an organization extending throughout Russia, which was financed by the governments of England and France, which was aided and abetted by the military delegations of the Entente in Russia, and which had as its object the overthrow of the Soviet government by force of arms, and the bringing about of a revolution by producing a famine. The time when the Soviet government was taking the severest measures against its foes was the latter half of August, and the first half of September, 1918. The Czecho-Slovaks had just made great progress in the Volga province, while the Allied forces were holding large parts of northern Russia and Siberia. The food question was very critical, and the peasants were becoming restive, because of the continuous confiscations which were imposed in order to save the cities from starvation.

The Entente agents in Russia, therefore, became bolder and bolder. The Socialist-Revolutionists of the right, which had by that time developed into a petty bourgeois party, passed over frankly into the ranks of the counter-revolution, and since they were pursuing terroristic tactics, they began their campaign with a few attempts at murder. They attempted the murder of Lenin, and by their successful murder of several prominent Bolshevist functionaries, forced the Soviet government to undertake measures of protection. It was then decided to strike a blow which would crush the enemies of the Republic. Military law was declared throughout the country, and external tribunals were authorized to impose the death penalty within 3 hours on all persons involved in the conspiracies of the Entente, or who had attempted to carry out a coup d'état. But the death penalty could only be executed by a unanimous decision of the court tribunal. It is probable that from three to four thousand counter-
revolutionary agents met their death in these few weeks. These people were fully convinced that the Soviet government was about to fall. Nothing could move them from this faith, but the fact that the Soviet power had the power to punish them with death if they should raise their hand against that government. The convincing effect of these measures of reprisal is illustrated by the fact that two or three weeks of their operation was sufficient to put an end to all counter-revolutionary conspiracies and attempts at crime.

The difference between the "Red Terror" and the "White Terror" in Russia, consisted in the fact that the former was a universal matter while the latter limited itself to individual acts. The agents of the "White Terror" were for the most part members of the Socialist-Revolutionist Party. This Party is not Marxian. It does not believe in the gradual evolution of human society through its economic growth, but has the more fatalistic, and the more active view that personalities and individualities play an important role in war. If the maxim of Marxism is "Man is determined by his Environment," then the maxim of the Russian Socialist-Revolutionists is: "The environment is determined by Man." The Socialist-Revolutionists always turn their attention chiefly to individual acts of terrorism. It was they who undertook the campaign of terror against the Czarist regime, at the end of the nineteenth century and during the revolution of 1905. On the other hand, the terrorism which was applied by the Bolsheviki last summer is not opposed to Marxist principles. It was directed not against individuals, but against a class. It was not interested in destroying this person or that, but in detaining them as hostages for the good behavior of a great number of persons representing the possessing classes. Those methods which threatened a great number of capitalists as well as their agents with confiscation of all their personal property, and even with the death penalty, prevented those who were still at liberty from undertaking any actions that might have resulted disastrously for their friends. Whatever we may think of the moral side of mass terrorism, we must remember that it was not invented by the Soviet Government. The capitalistic governments of the West were the first ones to use these tactics, in order to hold down the revolutionary movements of their own working class. Mass terror was applied and is still applied by the counter-revolutionary "White Guards," which flooded Russia
under the protection of the governments of the Kaiser and of
the Entente during the past year. During the summer of 1918,
sixteen thousand miners were killed by the court-martials of
General Krasnoff on the Don. Summary execution of railroad
men and workers who had rebelled against the reactionary gov-
ernment of Admiral Kolchak by striking, took place in Siberia
recently. This sort of “White Terror” has the open approval
of the capitalist press of the Entente countries, which laud the
introduction of severe measures, in order to retain order and
respect for private property. But this same press will set up a
howl of “Red Terror,” as soon as the Bolsheviks undertake
similar measures for the defense of the working-class. Mass
terror was also frequently used in this war by the armies of
capitalistic states, both of the Central powers and of the Allies.
The German army took hostages for the good behavior of
the population of Belgium, and the Allies proceeded similarly
with the native Asiatic population in Mesopotamia, Persia, and
Syria.

The terrible epoch of the “Red Terror” lasted about six
weeks, in Russia. It ceased as soon as the Soviet Government
had so far developed its internal powers as to feel itself strong
enough to ignore those few persons who still refused to recognize
its authority. When I left Russia last month, extremely severe
measures were being applied to such persons as had been guilty
of infractions of revolutionary discipline, or plunderings of mem-
bres of the Red Army, bribery, misappropriation of public funds
by officers of the Republic. It is a striking fact that the Supreme
Revolutionary tribunal spares no one. Even members of the
Bolshevik Party who have violated discipline have often suffered
the heaviest penalties. But the “Red Terror” accomplished its
task, as soon as the “White Terror” was vanquished. It then
retired into the background where it continued to function as the
guardian of proletarian discipline and order, as a serious admoni-
tion of the truth: “Revolutionis salus suprema lex,”—The Sav-
ing of the Revolution is the Supreme Law.
The Truth About the Allied Intervention in Russia

One of the most deadly weapons wielded by the ruling classes of all countries is their power to censor the press; for thereby they are able to create under the pretext of military necessity an artificial public opinion with the object of hiding their fell designs. Never was this fact more clearly demonstrated than at the present moment; never was it more obvious that the governments of the Central Powers and the Allies, in order to suppress the workers’ and peasants’ revolution in Russia, must hide from their own people the truth about this revolution, must represent it to the proletariat of the West as the work of a gang of robbers. Just as a criminal or weak-minded man, after having committed some offense against public law, tries to shift the blame on to any person he finds handy, so the ruling classes of Europe, after butchering their people in a cruel four-years’ war, now in terror before the judgment of humanity and the inner prickings of conscience, try to create for themselves pleasant illusions and find convenient scapegoats, on which to vent their wrath.

One cannot be surprised, of course, that the governments of England, France and Germany should, through their official agencies and their press censors, endeavor to blacken the work of the Russian Revolution. Living here in the besieged castle of the Russian Workers’ and Peasants’ Soviets, surrounded by the armed hosts of the European warlords, I am in a position to see more clearly than those outside this iron ring, the power possessed by the ruling classes, whose foul designs include the strangling of the youngest of the governments of the toiling masses. For this is what I have to face day after day. Telegrams to my newspaper are suppressed, or, if passed by the British censor, are decapitated, so that no sense is left in them, postal communication is severed, provocative rumors about what is happening here are spread in London and Paris, and my attempts to deny them are frustrated. All the technical apparatus of the capitalist states of Western Europe is set in motion against those whose duty it is to tell the truth about the Russian Revolution and to convey to the West the cry of the Russian people for help. But let not the governments of England and France
forget that "foul deeds will rise, though all the world o'erwhelm them to men's eyes." Those who suppress the truth create forces that bring the truth into the light of day, but by methods which they least expect.

Knowing therefore the love of freedom and the sense of justice of the British working man, I am in these few lines appealing to him to understand the facts that I have here set before him—facts which I have obtained after four years' residence in Russia. When he has read them he will be able to judge for himself whether the policy of the British government towards the Russian Revolution is a policy of which he approves.

I begin from the beginning. The Russian Revolution in March, 1917, was nothing less than the first practical step taken by the working classes of a European country to protest against the indefinite dragging on of the war for objects hidden in the Chancellories of secret European diplomacy. There is no better proof of this than in the fact that the first act of the first all-Russian Soviet conference in May, 1917, was an appeal to the workers of the world to lay down their arms and make peace with each other over the heads of their governments. The Russian workers and peasants were brought to this conviction by their intense sufferings during the previous two and a half years. The war in fact had brought their economically poorly developed country to ruin, the industries were at a standstill, famine was raging in the towns, and the villages were filled with maimed soldiers. Long before the March revolution one could see that the Russian army was no longer capable of the offensive, even if it had the inspiration to effect one, and meanwhile all the towns in the interior of Russia were, even in 1916, filled with deserters.

The next fact I wish to set forth is that the Governments of the Allies, by refusing to allow the Stockholm Conference to take place in the autumn of 1917, destroyed the belief of the Russian peasants and workers in the sincerity of the Allied cause, weakened the hands of those in Germany who were working for peace, played into the hands of the Prussian war party and made the calamitous Brest-Litovsk peace inevitable.

The "Bolshevik" revolution of October, 1917, was the
second protest of the Russian workers and peasants against the continuation of a war which they had not the physical strength to carry on, nor the moral justification to support. It seemed better for them to risk the dangers of making peace single-handed with the Prussian warlords than be ruined by being dragged along in a war for the objects which were disclosed in the secret treaties between the Allies. The October Revolution differed from that of March. For the first time in the history of the world a people realized that only by radically altering the whole form of human government was it possible to put down war. Declining all ideas of a compromise peace between the rulers of the countries at war (a solution which would only have led to another war) the workers and peasants of Russia dared to create a government, which, by putting an end to the political and economic power of landlords and financial syndicates, definitely rooted out that poison in human society which alone is the cause of war. For the Russian people under Czarism saw more clearly perhaps than the workers of England and Germany that the competition between the great banking and industrial trusts of London, Paris, Berlin and New York for spheres of influence, mining and railway concessions in undeveloped countries like their own, was the root cause of all modern wars; and that, therefore, to put an end to war, the social and political system, which breeds the exploiting trust, must be once and for all overthrown.

From this it follows that the workers and peasants of Russia after the October Revolution were forced to undertake a task, which the weak Kerensky government (controlled, as it was, mainly by landlords and bankers) could not even attempt to solve, namely to take directly under its authority the principal means of production, distribution and exchange. For this reason the railways, waterways and mines were declared state property and the banks taken under government control. But Russia was bankrupt. Exhausted by the cruel war, through which Czarism had dragged her for three torturous years, her economic power was completely broken down. Food and the raw materials of industry in the country were reduced to a minimum and the land flooded with valueless paper money. To repay the bankers of London and Paris the war debts of Czarism, the Russian workers and peasants would have to export annually for many years to come in
gold or raw materials a sum not less than one milliard roubles (30,000,000 pounds sterling) without obtaining any return. To bear this burden in addition to others, brought about by the ruin of the industries, the collapse of the railways and the famine, was impossible without reducing the people to slavery. The Russian workers and peasants therefore could no longer admit the principle that they should pay tribute to foreign bankers for the doubtful honor of serving as their cannon fodder. So the repudiation of the debts of Czarism and the nationalization of all the natural resources of the Russian Republic, to serve the interests of the people, was the first and most essential of the principles of the October Revolution. But no sooner was this done than the governments of England and France began to plot for the overthrow of the Russian Soviet Government. In November, 1917, the French Government paid a large sum of money to the Ukrainian Rada in order that it should raise a rebellion against the workers’ and peasants’ government. On the Don, General Kaledin received arms and ammunition from the Allied military missions, in order that his Cossacks should join in the attack. But the peasants of the Ukraine and laboring Cossacks refused to be the tool of the Paris and London Stock Exchanges, threw off the yoke of the Rada and of General Kaledin and created their own revolutionary soviets in federal union with the Soviet Government of Great Russia. Then followed the tragicomedy of Kieff, when the Ukrainian Rada, which had been bought by Allied gold, finding itself threatened by its indignant revolutionary peasantry, sold itself to the German warlords and invited the armed forces of the Central Powers to protect its class interests.

Foiled in their attempts to use the Ukrainian Rada, the Allied governments began to spread rumors that the leaders of the Russian workers’ and peasants’ government were agents of Germany and had betrayed the working classes of England and France, because they had brought Russia out of the war. Against these slanders may be set the following facts. The necessity for Russia to obtain peace was dictated, firstly, by the impossibility of undertaking the work of social reconstruction at home, if a foreign war was draining the country of its material resources; and, secondly, by the desire of the workers and peasants of Russia to maintain a neutral position between the armed camps of Europe, and to show to
the workers of other lands that they had no partiality to any of the warring governments. The best proof that the Soviet government was sincere in its desire to make peace not with the German government, but with the German people, was seen in the course of the Brest-Litovsk negotiations. The Soviet government not only showed no desire to bring the negotiations to a speedy conclusion, but did everything possible to cause them to drag on indefinitely, so as to expose to the German people the rapacity and cynicism of the German government. By these tactics they were largely responsible for the great strike in Germany during January, 1918.

This was the first real protest of the German people against the war, and the policy of their government, and it was brought about by the tactics of the leaders of the Russian Revolution. Contrast with this the tactics of the Allied governments, who, in spite of their loud assertions that by armed forces alone can Prussian militarism be crushed, have after four years’ battering away at the Western front at the cost of thousands of the noblest lives failed to call forth a single demonstration in Germany against the war. Trotsky succeeded in the Council Chambers of Brest-Litovsk in creating that spirit of rebellion among the German people, which all the heavy guns and armored tanks of Field-Marshal Haig had failed to create in the course of the whole campaign. But the strike in Germany failed and the German government was left free to crush the Russian Revolution. Why did the strike fail?

Because Hindenburg and the Prussian Junkers were able to appeal to the more uneducated and less class-conscious among the German people and to say to them: “Don’t withdraw your support from us, because, if you do, the Allied governments will ruin Germany and reduce you to slavery.” They were able to point to the secret treaties, published by the Soviet government, which showed that the Allies had been fighting to annex Germany up to the left bank of the Rhine, and that their governments had not repudiated these treaties. They were able to point to the fact that, although the workers’ and peasants’ government of Russia had invited the Allies to take part in the Brest-Litovsk negotiations, had waited in fact a fortnight for them to make up their minds,
the Allied governments had refused. Thus the Prussian war-
lords were able to tell their people that the Allies would not
hear of peace and that therefore a strike at this time would
be treachery to their country. It was only when the Soviet
government saw that the Russian Revolution had been de-
serted by the Allied democracies and betrayed by the German
proletariat, that they were compelled reluctantly to sign the
cruel Brest-Litovsk peace. And the very fact that the Kaiser
and his hirelings imposed such onerous conditions shows how
much he feared the Russian workers’ and peasants’ revolution
and how abominable is the slander that the Bolsheviks are
the agents of the German government, since it was not the
Russian peasants and workers that deserted the Allies, but
the Allies, yes, and I fear the working classes in the Allied
countries, who deserted the Russian peasants and workers in
the hour of their distress.

Now, what was the policy of the Soviet government of
Russia after the Brest-Litovsk treaty? I submit that it was
a policy which aimed at maintaining the strictest neutrality
between the two great fighting camps. Yet the governments
of Germany and the Allies did everything to make the main-
tenance of neutrality impossible, because they looked upon
the Russian workers and peasants either as objects for eco-
nomic exploitation or as cannon fodder to be used by them.
The Soviet Government was forced to give up the Black Sea
fleets to Germany (as a matter of fact a great part of the fleet
was blown up to prevent its falling into German hands) and
was forced to accept the principle of individual exchange of
war prisoners, whereby hundreds of thousands of Russian
workers and peasants were left to work in Germany in slavery
under the Kaiser. And why had the ultimatums, which were
showered upon the Soviet government from Berlin, to be
accepted? They had to be accepted because the Russian
army had been ruined. And why was it ruined? Because the
Allies had tried, all through the spring and summer of 1917,
to force the Russian workers and peasants to fight for the
objects which were disclosed by the Bolsheviks in the secret
treaties. Whenever the Russian people, either through the
Soviet or through the more progressive members of the Pro-
visional Government, asked the Allies to define their war
aims, they were met by platitudes about liberty and justice.
Meanwhile the peasants and workers were starving and had no prospect before them but endless war for the undefined aims of foreign governments. Was it likely that a 12-million army could be kept together under those conditions? Was it possible for the Bolshevik government, deserted by the Allies, to do anything else but sign the Brest-Litovsk peace and bow to every ultimatum which the tyrants in Berlin chose to send them? The Allied governments all through last winter acted as if they feared the Soviet Government of the Russian Workers and Peasants a great deal more than they feared the Imperialist Government of Germany.

But in spite of its isolation the Soviet Government, in the spring of this year, commenced a program of social reconstruction. In order to succeed in this sphere it was necessary to receive help from economically more advanced countries. The railways were in a state of collapse; technical appliances were needed to repair the locomotives and wagons. The mines were flooded and broken down. Instructors and engineers were required to undertake the difficult task of restoring their working capacity. Agricultural machinery was required to help the peasant to till the soil, which, as a result of the war, had in large areas fallen out of cultivation. The Soviet Government asked the governments of Europe to help in this great task. To each of the countries of the great alliances an offer was made to treat with Russia, to supply her with those material and technical needs, in return for which the Soviet Government offered certain raw materials of export and certain railway and mining concessions. These concessions, of course, were to be kept under strict public control, so as to ensure that, while the foreign capitalists should have a fair return for their undertakings, the workers and peasants should not be subjected to the exploitation which they had experienced under Czarism. The offer was made to Germany and negotiations proceeded all summer in Berlin.

It was also made to the United States through the medium of one of the most sympathetic American representatives in Moscow, who personally took the proposals with him to America. But what was the attitude of the official diplomatic representatives of the Allies? They buried themselves in the provincial town of Vologda, refused to come to Mos-
cow and one of their number last April made a cynical statement to the press that the governments of the Allies could not recognize a government, which was not either in fact or in law a representative of the "true" Russia. More than this; the Allied ambassadors became in Vologda the centre of every counter-revolutionary intrigue in the country and when the Soviet Government, seeing what was going on, courteously requested them to come to Moscow, the seat of the government, to which they were supposed to be accredited, otherwise it could not be held responsible for their safety, they left the territories of the Republic on the ground that they had been insulted!! The Soviet Government insisted on putting them under control if they remained in Vologda, in order to prevent counter-revolutionary elements in the country from getting at them. To what extent this action was justified may be seen from the following facts. On the basis of documents discovered on the premises of the Czecho-Slovak National Council in Moscow in July, the fact was established that at the end of February this year an agreement was reached between certain British and French military agents in Russia and the Czecho-Slovak National Council. This Council had taken under its control the Czecho-Slovak prisoners and deserters from the Austrian army and had formed them into a separate legion to fight against Austria. This had already been done under Czarism, and after Brest-Litovsk the question was raised of sending them to the French front. To this the Soviet Government agreed. But it appears that the British and French governments had other work for the Czecho-Slovak soldiers to perform and were by no means anxious that they should go to France. For between March and May, 1918, the French Consul in Moscow paid to two persons on the Czecho-Slovak National Council the sum of nine million roubles and the British Consul in Moscow paid eighty-five thousand pounds to the same people. Directly after these payments the Czecho-Slovak forces, which were scattered all along the Siberian and Eastern railways, rose in rebellion, occupied most of the important strategic posts in East Russia, thus cutting off Central and Northern Russia from the corn producing districts, and condemning the workers and peasants of Muscovy to famine and the industries to destruction. The legend circulated in Western Europe that the Soviet Gov-
ernment was preparing to hand the Czecho-Slovaks to the Austrian government is false, for the former had only too readily accepted the proposal the Czecho-Slovaks had themselves made, before the interference by the Allied Governments, that they should be sent to France.

But even after the seizure of the Siberian railway and the opening of the road to Vladivostok, the commanders of the Czecho-Slovaks not only made no attempt to move their troops out of Russia but began to advance west towards Moscow, clearly showing they were carrying out the pre-arranged plan, for which they had received these payments.

At every town where they arrived they united with counter-revolutionary forces, organized by the local landlords and bosses, and began to break up the Soviets, shoot the leading revolutionary leaders and reestablish a military dictatorship of the propertied classes. Up to this time every counter-revolutionary rebellion which had been raised against the Soviet Government had been suppressed by the Red army, thus showing that the Soviet government had sufficient authority and support among the masses to put it down. It was only when hired bands of foreign imperialists raised rebellion and supported the local counter-revolutionary forces, which had been defeated in a square fight, that the position of the Soviet Government began to be in danger. Thus the Allied Governments in East Russia, like the German government in the Ukraine, endeavored by financing counter-revolution and anarchy to make the work of social reconstruction and the feeding of the starving people impossible for the Soviet Government.

The governments of England and France, in order to recoup themselves for the losses of the London and Paris bankers, incurred by the Russian Revolution, are now trying to overthrow the Soviet government and reestablish a government with the aid of armed hirelings, which will impose again the milliard tribute of the loans of Czarism upon the backs of the Russian workers and peasants. They are also trying to force the Russian people to fight in the war against Germany, against their will, to use them as cannon fodder, although one of the main motives of the workers' and peasants' revolution was to free themselves from the war, which was ruining them and condemning them to starvation. To
impose fresh tribute upon the Russian people, to force them
to fight against their will, to still further increase their
misery, indescribable as it is at present, that is the task,
which the British government asks the British soldier to
perform, when he fights on the Murman; that is the object
for which the British munition worker is toiling, when he
makes shells, which are to be fired upon his Russian com-
rades.

As one who has lived for four years in Russia, who has
seen the sufferings of her people and their heroic efforts to
free themselves, I categorically assert that the anarchy and
famine now raging in Russia is the deliberate work of the
imperialist governments of Europe, and in this respect the
governments of the Allies and of Germany behave like vul-
tures of the same brood. For what Germany has done in the
Ukraine, the Allied governments have done in Siberia and
the territories east of the Volga.

And yet the British workingman is told that in Russia
there is chaos and anarchy and that the British government,
out of sympathy for the Russian people, is sending expedi-
tions to help them, and to bring a rule of law and order.
Where is the law which finances rebellion against a govern-
ment of the workers and poorest peasantry, in order to force
it to pay an intolerable tribute and reduce it to industrial
slavery? Where is the order which brings war to a land that
is already exhausted by the three years' slaughter of the
European Imperial butchers? The Soviet Government of
Russia asked peace and the governments of England and
France are trying to give it a sword: it asked for help in its
work of social reconstruction and it has been given the ser-
pent of anarchy. It is just because the workers and peasants
of Russia are trying to establish a new order in their country
that the governments of Europe are trembling and are trying
by their treacherous attacks on Russia to destroy this new
order and in its place to establish the old. For, if the Soviet
Government succeeds, it will for ever put an end to exploita-
tion by social parasites and will sweep away the profiteers
that fatten out of war.

The "financial capital" of London and Paris is trying to
save the "real" Russia but it is really forging for it new
chains. By a Judas kiss it is trying to hide the shekels of silver, for which it has sold the Russian people. But let the workers of England know the truth about this great crime; let them say to the British government: “Hands off; let none dare to touch the Russian Revolution, the noblest product of these four years of blood and tears.”

I know how firm in the memory of British workingmen is the tradition of freedom with which they have for generations been associated. When the ruling classes of England acted as suppressors of movements for freedom in America, when they interfered to bolster up privilege and reaction on the continent of Europe, the British workers raised their voices in protest. At the end of the eighteenth century the landlords of England declined to treat with the ambassadors of the free French republic and declared war upon a people who had cast off a feudal tyranny. Today the banking oligarchies in London try to strangle by isolation and spread of famine the great movement of freedom that has sprung up in Eastern Europe. They will not succeed now, just as they did not succeed then, and the conquests of the Russian Revolution will endure, as did the conquests of the French Revolution last century. But to bring this about, the workers of England must know the truth, and, knowing it, must dare to act.

Moscow, August 1918.
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