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LESSONS OF THE
RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

By

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of the Russian Socialist Republic).

3d.

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FOREWORD.

THE Editorial Committee of the B.S.P. here places before British readers the first writings that have appeared in this country from the pen of the great Socialist leader of the Russian Revolution. The present pamphlet is made up of articles written by Lenin in July, 1917, with the addition of a brief, but pregnant essay, also from his pen, dealing with the Soviets. The pamphlet, in its present form, was originally published in Russia, with the sanction of the author, who apparently did not think that the age of the articles militated against their political value to-day, after the great change of November 6-7. In this Lenin was right. If anything, the political interest of the essays contained in the pamphlet has been enhanced by the subsequent course of events, demonstrating as they do that Lenin's appreciation of the course of the Russian Revolution up to the moment of writing and his prognostication as to its future development were dictated, not by idle speculation, but by a profound knowledge of the moving forces of the Revolution. Indeed, Lenin was the first and, for a long time, the only one even among his own party to realise that the Russian Revolution was not to be a mere change in the system of government corresponding to the traditional substitution of the power of the capitalist middle-class for that of the Autocracy, but a profound social revolution, unparalleled in the world's history; destined to bring about the domination of the industrial working class in alliance with the poorer sections of the peasantry and to establish, correspondingly, a new political order, also unknown in the world's history. Revolutions have their own logic, independent of the will and the wishes of parties, classes and individuals, and what seemed at the beginning but a repetition of similar events which had occurred in the west of Europe previously, soon, under the pressure of internal and external circumstances, began to develop a logic of its own, which, through many vicissitudes, finally led to the establishment of the Socialist Soviet Republic. It is the revolutionary merit of Lenin

and at the same time a striking testimony to his genius that he traced the inexorable trend of that logic in advance, and so shaped his and his party's action as to make it the conscious human factor without which even the most elemental processes of history cannot take place. Lenin has proved himself to be a revolutionary leader in the Marxist sense—a leader who makes use of the ascertained tendencies of an historical situation in order to bring them to actual fruition.

As a survey of the Revolution during the first months of its course—the months which brought out the germs implanted in the Revolution at its birth—Lenin's essays are invaluable, coming as they do from such an authoritative pen. It was necessary to append to them a few explanatory notes to make certain terms and dates more intelligible to the ordinary reader. It would be advisable, however, to read the present pamphlet alongside of M. Litvinoff's brochure: "The Bolshevik Revolution," also published by the B.S.P. (21a Maiden Lane, Strand, London, W.C. 2), where will be found a more detailed account of the external events referred to by Lenin in his essays.

At the moment when these lines are being penned, grave storm clouds are gathering over the heads of the courageous makers and leaders of the Russian Socialist Republic. Countless enemies, external and internal, belonging to all races, classes and parties, have pooled their hatred and resources together in order to make an end of the grand Commonwealth which is in the process of "becoming." Perhaps the clouds may yet dissipate. Perhaps they will burst and destroy the half-completed work of the Russian people. But even if they do, that work will not disappear. Lenin and his friends have built well and for all eternity, and not only will their creation come to life again, but it will also for ever remain the model for the builders in other countries whenever *their* time comes,

THE EDITORIAL COMMITTEE OF THE B.S.P.

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I.—RADICAL QUESTIONS OF THE REVOLUTION.

A revolution marks a critical transition in the life of great popular masses. Of course, only a fully matured crisis renders a real revolution possible and necessary. Moreover, even as a transition period in the life of a single individual teaches him much, leads him through an emotional stage suffused with new rich content, so also does a revolution teach a whole nation in a relatively short time highly instructive and valuable lessons.

During a revolution millions and tens of millions of people learn in a single week incomparably more than otherwise in a whole year. For at such critical moments in the life of a nation it becomes markedly evident which classes pursue certain aims, what are their relative forces, and the means at their command.

Every conscious workman, soldier and peasant, should attentively ponder the lessons taught by the Russian Revolution; the more so now, at the end of July, when it is manifest that the first phase of our revolution has ended in failure.

I.

Indeed, let us see what the masses of workmen and peasants have been fighting for in carrying the revolution into life. What have they been expecting from the revolution? We all know that all along they hoped for freedom, peace, bread, and land.

Now, what are the actual facts?

Instead of freedom the arbitrary rule of the past is being restored. Capital punishment is being introduced at the front, peasants are brought to trial for "wilfully" seizing the landlords' lands. The printing establishments of the Labour press are raided. The Bolsheviks are arrested.

not infrequently without accusation, or on the pretext of charges which are simply calumnious.

It may be argued that the persecution of the Bolsheviks is by no means a violation of freedom, since only certain persons on specific charges are thus persecuted. But such arguments bear the marks of premeditated untruth. For why should printing offices be raided, newspapers suppressed for the crimes of individuals, even if these crimes are proven and sustained by law? It would be altogether different if the government declared criminal the entire Bolshevik party, its ideas and views. But every one knows that the government of free Russia never could, and, indeed, never attempted, to do anything of the kind.

And look at the venomous slanders launched against the Bolsheviks! The newspapers of both landlords and capitalists have been furiously attacking the Bolsheviks for their campaign against the war, against the landlords and against the capitalists. These newspapers openly demanded the arrest and prosecution of the Bolsheviks even before there was a single charge against a single Bolshevik.

The people desire peace. But the revolutionary government of free Russia has resumed the war aimed at the spoliation of foreign nations by the Russian financial magnates. The government of free Russia has entrenched itself behind wiles and tricks, but it has not yet proposed a just peace to all nations.

Bread there is none. The menace of famine is imminent. It is an open secret how the capitalists and the rich loot the treasury on war orders (the war costs the people 50,000,000 roubles a day!) They reap enormous profits from the high cost of living, and absolutely nothing is being done toward improving the production and distribution of goods by and for the working class. The capitalists are more and more daring in locking out the workmen, throwing them on the street at a time when the people suffer from underproduction.

The overwhelming majority of the peasants throughout a long series of conferences have loudly and unequivocally announced their decision to proclaim as a crying injustice—nay, more, as direct plunder—the ownership of the soil by the powerful landlords. And the government which calls itself revolutionary and democratic persists in foiling the peasants' desires, in deceiving them with promises and delays. The capitalists for months harrassed the measures for enacting laws prohibiting the sale and purchase of land introduced by Tchernoff, Minister of Agriculture¹; and when a law of this type was finally promulgated, the capitalists began a despicable campaign of calumny against Tchernoff, which continues unabated. In its defence of the landlords the government has not recoiled from knavery; it has determined to proceed by law against the peasants for the "wilful" seizure of land!

Yes, the peasants are deceived; they are persuaded to await the convocation of the Constituent Assembly; but the capitalists keep on postponing it. Now that the date for convocation has been, under pressure by the Bolsheviki, set for October 13th, the capitalists openly resent such an "impossibly" short interval, and again insist upon postponing the Constituent Assembly. The most influential members of the party of capitalists and landlords—the "Cadet" Party,² or the "Party of the People's Freedom"—such as Countess Panina, openly preach the postponement of the Constituent Assembly until the end of the war.

Have patience with the land question until the Constituent Assembly! With the Constituent Assembly wait until the end of the war! With the end of the war wait until complete victory is won! This is the programme. So do the capitalists and landlords, holding as they do the majority in the government, laugh and scoff at the poor peasants.

¹ Tchernoff is the leader of the Socialist Revolutionary party (see note on p. 9) and author of its agrarian programme.

² So called after the initial syllables of its full name: Constitutional Democrats. It corresponds to the Liberal parties in the west of Europe.

II.

But how did all this come to pass in a land where the rule of Tsardom has been overthrown? In a country that is not free the people are governed by a Tsar and a handful of capitalists, landlords and bureaucrats elected by no one. In a free country the people are governed by those whom they themselves have chosen for this very purpose. At the elections the people divide themselves into parties, and, as a rule, every class of the population forms its own party; thus the landlords, the capitalists, the peasants, the workmen, have each their own parties. So, in free countries the government of a nation is shaped and influenced by the open struggle between parties and by their final agreements among themselves.

After the overthrow of the Tsar's regime, March 12th, 1917, Russia for about four months was governed like a free country, namely, by means of an open struggle between freely organized parties and of free agreements among themselves. In order therefore to understand the development of the Russian revolution it is most important to scrutinise the nature of the various parties, the interests they have been defending, and, finally, the relations of these parties to one another.

III.

After the overthrow of the Tsar's rule the power passed into the hands of the Provisional Government. The Provisional Government consisted of representatives of the bourgeoisie—that is to say, the capitalists, with whom the landlords joined hands. The party of the Cadets, the leading capitalist party, occupied first place as the ruling and state party of the capitalist and landlord class.

It was not by sheer accident that the power came into the hands of this party, though of course it was not the capitalists who fought the Tsar's troops, who shed blood for freedom's sake, but the workmen, peasants, sailors and soldiers. The ruling power, nevertheless, fell into the hands of the capitalist party, because the capitalist class had at its command the power of wealth, of organisa-

tion, and of education. Since 1905, and particularly during the war, the capitalist class, together with its joint partner, the landlord class, achieved great success in its work of organisation.

The Cadet Party has always been monarchist, in 1905 as well as during all the years until 1917. After the people's victory over the tyranny of Tsardom, this party proclaimed itself republican. Historic experience teaches that whenever the people vanquishes its ruling dynasty, the capitalist class is ready to be converted to republicanism, in order to preserve the privileges of capitalism and to assert its hegemony over the people.

The Cadet Party in *words* stands for the "People's Freedom." In *deeds* this party stands for all that is capitalist. No wonder all the landlords, the monarchists, the Black Hundreds¹ were quick to join it. Proof? The press and the elections. Immediately after the revolution all the capitalist press and all the Black Hundred press sang in complete unison with the Cadets. All the monarchist parties, fearful of overt acts, supported the Cadets in the elections—at least in Petrograd.

Having thus seized the power, the Cadets spared no effort to continue the war. The Russian capitalists are promised, in case of victory, the occupation of Constantinople, Galicia, Armenia, etc. As to the people, the Cadet government fed it profusely on promises, postponing the solution of questions most important to the workmen and peasants until the Constituent Assembly, without however setting a date for its convocation.

Making use of their liberty the people began to organize. The chief organisations of the workmen and peasants, representing the overwhelming majority of Russia's population, were the Soviets of Workmen's, Soldiers' and Peasants' Delegates. These Soviets² sprang into exist-

¹ "Black Hundreds" is a nickname for the hooligan elements, first organised in the Revolution of 1905 by the reactionaries of the Tsarist regime.

² "Soviet" is the Russian word for "Council."

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... during the days of the March revolution, and after a few weeks, in most of the large cities of Russia, as well as in many of the townships, all the conscious leading elements of the working class and the peasantry were united in the Soviets.

The Soviets were elected without any restrictions whatever. The Soviets were the real organization of the masses of the nation, of the workers and of the peasants. The Soviets were the real organizations of the enormous majority of the people.

It is manifest that the Soviets both could and must take over the entire governing power. Indeed there could and should have been no other government but that of the Soviets until the convocation of the Constituent Assembly. Only then would our revolution securely occupy the position of a really popular, really democratic revolution. Only then would the toiling masses, who really crave peace, be able resolutely and unflinchingly to enter upon a course of action which would immediately put an end to the war and bring about peace. Only then could the workers and peasants check and bridle the capitalists who pile up colossal war profits, having brought the country to the verge of collapse and famine. But within the Soviets only a minority of the delegates were on the side of the revolutionary party of the workers—the Bolsheviks, who demanded the transfer of all the ruling power to the Soviets. The majority of the delegates sided with the Mensheviks¹ and “Essers,”² who opposed such a transfer of power. Instead of superseding the government of the capitalists by that of the Soviets, these parties advocated

¹ “Mensheviks” are the moderate wing of the Russian Social Democratic party. The name is derived from a Russian word signifying “minority,” applied to them because at a Congress of the then still united Social-Democratic Party in 1903 they were left in a minority as against the Bolsheviks who had a majority on a question of policy.

² “Essers” (Socialist-Revolutionaries), so called after their initials (S. R.). This party is not Social-Democratic, basing as it does its socialism on the supposed Socialistic aspirations of the peasantry. The main plank in its programme is the “socialisation” of the land.

the support of the capitalists by means of a coalition government. This policy of alliance with the capitalists, pursued by the very parties which the nation blindly trusted and followed, the Essers and Mensheviks, reflects the whole revolutionary process undergone by the Revolution since its inception five months ago.

IV.

The mutual understanding between the capitalists and the Essers and Mensheviks has become manifest, now in one form, now in another, all through the course of the Russian revolution.

In the latter part of March, 1917, soon after the nation had conquered and the rule of the Tsar had been overthrown, the capitalist Provisional Government included Kerensky, as the "Socialist" member. Now Kerensky, in point of fact, has never been a Socialist; he was only a "Trudovik."¹ Only in March, 1917, did he begin to figure among the Socialist Revolutionaries, when such a position was no longer dangerous or unprofitable. It was, of course, the aim of the capitalist Provisional Government to use Kerensky, then Vice-President of the Petrograd Soviet, as a link by which it could chain to itself the whole Soviet. The Soviet—that is to say, its majority, consisting of Essers and Mensheviks—took the bait, and, soon after the formation of the Provisional Government, consented to support it "in so far as it fulfils its promises."

The Soviet regarded itself as the accountant, the comptroller of the deeds of the Provisional Government. But during all this time the Provisional Government did not make a single serious effort to foster the development of the revolution. It did absolutely nothing with regard to its own immediate task of convoking the Constituent Assembly; it has not yet presented the question to the locals, nor has it even established a central commission to elaborate this question. The government's only care

¹ "Trudovik"—member of the "Party of Toil," claiming to represent the interests of the peasantry.

was to renew the war, and cautiously and insidiously to thwart the course of the revolution; to promise everything and to accomplish nothing. The Essers and Mensheviks played the role of fools lavishly fed on grand phrases, promises, "to-morrows." Like the crow in the fable, they succumbed to flattery, listened complacently to the capitalists' assurances that they highly esteemed the Soviets, and that they would not move a step without them.

In reality, however, time passed and still the capitalist government did nothing to further the revolution. On the contrary, it succeeded, against the revolution, in laying the foundation for a counter-revolutionary organization of the generals and officers of the active army—or, at all events, in bringing them closer together. It succeeded, against the revolution, in calling into existence an organization of merchants and manufacturers who, gradually yielding under the pressure of the workmen, began at the same time to harrass production, and to prepare its complete cessation at the propitious moment.

But the organization of the more advanced workmen and peasants within the Soviets unswervingly went forward. The best men of the oppressed classes felt that the government, in spite of its understanding with the Petrograd Soviet, in spite of Kerensky's grandiloquence, remained as much as ever the enemy of the people, the enemy of the revolution. The masses, too, felt that if the resistance of the capitalists remained unbroken, the cause of peace, the cause of freedom, the very cause of the revolution itself would be irreparably lost. Impatience and vindictive passions rose high in the masses.

V.

On May 3-4 it burst. The movement broke forth elementally, spontaneously. It was so rigorously directed against the government that one regiment, fully armed, went straight to the Marinsky Palace to arrest the Ministers. It was universally apparent that the government could no longer hold out. The Soviets at that time could (and sought to) have taken the power into their hands without

the least resistance from any quarter. Instead, the Essers and Mensheviks have supported the toppling capitalist government, have ever more entangled themselves in their "alliance policy," have taken ever more fatal steps leading to the ruin of the revolution.

The revolution teaches all classes with a rapidity and thoroughness unknown in times of peace and everyday life. The capitalists, who are better organized, more expert in the business of class struggle and class politics, learned the lesson more readily than the other classes. Seeing that the position of the government was untenable, they resorted to a method which, since 1848, has been for decades practised by the capitalists in order to befog, divide and finally to overpower the working class. This method is the so-called "coalition ministry," composed of capitalists and of renegades from the Socialist camp.

In those countries where freedom and democracy have existed side by side with the revolutionary movement of the workers—for example, in England and France—the capitalists make use of this subterfuge, and very successfully too. The "Socialist" leaders, upon entering the capitalist ministries, invariably prove mere figureheads, puppets, simply a shield for the capitalists, a tool with which to defraud the workers. The "democratic and republican" Russian capitalists set in motion the very same scheme. The Essers and Mensheviks fell a victim to it, and on May 19th a "coalition" ministry, with the participation of Tchernoff, Tseretelli¹ & Co., became an accomplished fact.

The Essers and Menshevik parties were jubilant, complacently basking as they did in the radiance emanating from the Ministerial glory of their leaders. The capitalists gratulated themselves on having obtained such formidable allies against the people as the "leaders of the Soviets"—on having received from them the promise to support the renewal of the war, which had been temporarily

¹ The most popular leader of the Mensheviks, a Georgian by extraction, a member of the Second Duma, deported to Siberia in 1908 on a charge of conspiring against Tsardom.

interrupted. Well did the capitalists know the impotence of these leaders; well did they know that their own promises regarding the control and organization of production, peace policy, etc., would never be kept.

And so it happened. The second phase of the development of the revolution, extending over the period between May 19th and July 1st fully satisfied the expectations of the capitalists as to their success in deceiving the Essers and Mensheviks.

While Peshekhonoff and Skobelev¹ (of the duped parties) were fooling both themselves and the people into believing highflown phrases that they would take away 100 per cent. of the capitalists' profit; that "their resistance is broken," etc., the capitalists went on fortifying themselves. Nothing, absolutely nothing was done to check them all during that time. The renegade Ministers proved to be mere talking machines to mislead the oppressed classes, and the entire governmental apparatus remained in the hands of the bureaucrats and the capitalists. The notorious Palchinsky,² assistant Minister of Commerce, was a typical representative of this machine, blocking as he did any and every measure directed against the capitalists. The Ministers kept on chatting—and all remained as before.

Minister Tseretelli was especially utilized by the capitalists in their fight against the revolution. He was dispatched to "pacify" Cronstadt,³ where the revolutionists had dared to remove the commissary appointed by the government. At that time the capitalist press launched an incredibly clamorous, malicious, furious campaign of

¹ Peshekhonoff—a prominent member of the small Populist Socialist party, a sort of Radical party, with mild Socialist leanings. Skobelev—a member of the Menshevik party, who sat in the last Duma. The two, together with Tseretelli, entered the Provisional Government after the crisis of May 3/19, 1917.

² A former emigré in London, a civil engineer by profession, a sympathiser with Menshevism.

³ Cronstadt, the well-known naval fortress defending Petrograd, a stronghold of the Bolsheviks in the first months of the Revolution.

falsehood and invective against Cronstadt, accusing it of intending to "split off from Russia," repeating this and similar absurdities in a thousand variations, to frighten the petty bourgeoisie and the unsophisticated philistines. The most typical representative of this dull panic-stricken class, Tseretelli, innocently took the bait and energetically went to work to "subdue and pacify" Cronstadt, without realizing his own position as a minion of the counter-revolutionary capitalist class. In fact, this man was a cork in bringing about an "understanding" with revolutionary Cronstadt, according to which the commissary of the place was not to be appointed by the Government, but elected by the local citizens and only confirmed by the Government. With such miserable compromises, the Ministers who had deserted Socialism to please the capitalists, spent their time.

Thus, whenever a capitalist Minister could not possibly appear in defence of the Government, as, for example, before revolutionary workers, or the Soviets, a "Socialist Minister"—such as Skobelev, Tseretelli, or Tchernoff—appeared, or rather, was sent by the capitalists. He would conscientiously accomplish the capitalists' job: defend the Ministry, whitewash the capitalists, begot the minds of the people by repeating promises, promises, only promises, and end by advising them to wait, wait, wait.

Minister Tchernoff was kept particularly busy bargaining with his capitalist colleagues. Down to this very month of July, when, after the shake-up of July 16-17 the new "crisis of power" took place, and the Cadets left the Cabinet, Minister Tchernoff was always occupied with the useful, interesting, profoundly national work of "persuading" his capitalist colleagues, of exhorting them to consent at least to a law prohibiting the purchase of land. Such a law had been solemnly promised to the peasantry at the All-Russian Congress of Peasants' Soviets in Petrograd, but it remained only a promise. Tchernoff was unable to fulfil it either in May or in June. Only when the revolutionary explosion took place on July 16-17 and when the Cadets left the Ministry—only then was the law put in force. But it proved to be a solitary measure, incap-

able of seriously aiding the peasants in their
the landlords for possession of the soil.

Meanwhile the "revolutionary democrat," K. this newly-fledged member of the Socialist Revolutionary party, was brilliantly accomplishing at the front counter-revolutionary task of resuming the war, the task in which Gutchkoff,¹ the despised of the people, had utterly failed. Kerensky was intoxicated with his own eloquence; the imperialists who used him burned incense to him—he was flattered and worshipped. And all this for his loyal, devoted service to the capitalists—exhorting the "revolutionary armies" to consent to a renewal of a war avowedly waged to conquer Constantinople and Lemberg, Erzerum, and Trebizond for the Russian capitalists.

Thus passed the second phase of the Russian revolution, from May 19th to June 22nd. The counter-revolutionary capitalist class having strengthened its position and fortified itself under the cover and protection of the "Socialist" Ministers, was preparing an onslaught upon both the external and the internal enemy—the revolutionary workmen.

VI.

On June 22nd the party of the revolutionary workers, the Bolsheviks, arranged for a demonstration in Petrograd to give articulate expression to the ever-growing dissatisfaction and indignation of the masses. The leaders of the Essers and Mensheviks, entangled in their alliances with the capitalists, bound hand and foot by their imperialist war-policy, became alarmed, feeling that they were losing their hold upon the masses. A general outcry was raised against this demonstration—an outcry in which the Essers and Mensheviks joined with the counter-revolutionary Cadets. Under the guidance of the Essers and Mensheviks, as a result of their policy of alliance with the capitalists, the tendency of the small property owners (petty

¹Gutchkoff, the founder and leader of the "Octobrists," a moderate Conservative party of the capitalist and financial magnates, at one time President of the Duma, Minister of War in the first Provisional Government till the advent of the Coalition Cabinet.

to unite with the big counter-revolutionary defined itself with amazing clearness. In this crisis contained the historic significance, and the class-meaning of the crisis of July 22nd.

The Bolsheviks, unwilling to lead the workmen into a separate battle against the united Cadets, Essers and Mensheviks, decided to give up the demonstration. But the Essers and Mensheviks, hoping to retain at least a little of their waning influence among the masses, felt impelled to order a general demonstration for July 1st. As for the capitalists, they lost their wits out of sheer rage, recognizing in this move the leaning of the petty bourgeoisie toward the side of the proletariat—and determined to paralyze the action of the democracy by a military movement on the front.

Indeed, the 1st of July gave an awe-inspiring victory to the slogans of the revolutionary workmen, the rallying cries of the Bolsheviks among the Petrograd masses; so on July 2nd the capitalist and the Bonapartist Kerensky announced that the military offensive at the front had begun on that very 1st July.

This meant practically the resumption of a war, in the interests of the capitalists, against the will of the great majority of the toiling masses. With this renewed belligerency there was connected, on the one hand, the tremendous growth of chauvinism and the passage of military—and, consequently, of political power into the hands of a gang of Bonapartists; on the other hand, the recourse to violent repression of the masses, persecution of the internationalists, abolition of the freedom of propaganda, arrests and wholesale shooting of those who opposed the war.

If the 19th of May tied the Essers and Mensheviks to the triumphal chariot of capitalism by a rope, the 2nd of July shackled them with chains.

VII.

The resentment of the masses upon the renewal of the war spread with rapidity. On July 16—17, their indignation

burst forth in an explosion which the Bolsheviks tried to mitigate and to direct into organized channels.

The Essers and Mensheviks, fettered to their masters, consented to everything; to the bringing of reactionary troops to Petrograd, to the restoration of capital punishment, to the disarming of the workmen and the revolutionary soldiers, and to arrests, persecutions, and the suppression of newspapers. The power which the capitalists, inside the Government, could not entirely usurp, and which the Soviets refused to take, fell into the hands of a military clique of Bonapartists, who were, of course, supported by the Cadets and the landlords, by the Black Hundreds and the Capitalists.

Step by step downward. Once on the inclined plane of alliances with the capitalists, the Essers and Mensheviks irretrievably went down to the very bottom. On March 13th, in the Petrograd Soviet, they had promised only conditional support to the Provisional Government. On May 19th they saved it from collapse, and allowed themselves to become its hirelings and defenders, unreservedly countenancing an aggressive campaign on the front. On June 22nd they united with the counter-revolutionary capitalists in a campaign of falsehood and calumny against the revolutionary workmen. On July 2nd they approved the renewal of the predatory war. On July 16th they assented to the calling in of the reactionary regiments, the beginning of the final and complete surrender of power to the Bonapartists. Thus they proceeded step by step downward.

The disgusting fate of these parties, the Essers and Mensheviks, is by no means an accident. European experience has many times proven it to be the outcome of the economic situation of the small property holders—the small property-owners.

VIII.

It is a matter of common observation how the small property owner uses all his energies to get into the society of the wealthy, to become a "captain of industry," to

enter the ranks of the great capitalists. So long as capitalism reigns supreme, the small property holder will be confronted with two alternatives—either to succeed in climbing to the heights of the capitalist class (at best possible for but one per cent.)—or to remain for a while struggling in the position of a ruined little “boss,” a semi-workman, and to land at last with a crash in the ranks of the working class. It is likewise in politics. The petty bourgeois democracy, especially in the persons of its leaders, clings to the skirts of the big capitalists. These leaders console their followers with promises and assurances of the plausibility of alliance with the “grand bourgeoisie.” For a short time at best they are favoured by the capitalists with some tit-bits of concession to the few top-layers of the toiling masses; but in everything decisive, in every matter of importance, the petty—bourgeois—democracy remains an impotent appendage, an obedient tool in the hands of the financial magnates. The experience of England and France has often proved this.

During the Russian revolution, when under the pressure of the war and the momentous crisis created by it, events unfolded with extraordinary swiftness, the period of March—July, 1917, has fully corroborated the Marxist theory regarding the instability of the position occupied by the small property owners.

This is the ultimate lesson of the Russian revolution: There is no salvation for the toiling masses in the iron jaws of war, of famine, of enslavement by landlords and capitalists except in complete renunciation of any and all alliances with the capitalist class. Only the revolutionary workers, supported by the poorest peasants, can overcome the resistance of the capitalists and lead the nation to the winning of the soil without compensation, to complete liberty, to victory over starvation and over the war, and to a just and lasting peace.

AFTERWORD.

The foregoing article, as will be seen from the text, was written in July. The history of the August revolution has fully borne out the contentions stated therein. Moreover, the Korniloff¹ uprising, toward the end of August, has created a new turning point in the revolution, unmistakably proving to the people that the Cadets, in union with the counter-revolutionary generals, seek to overthrow the Soviets and restore the monarchy. How strong this new turn of the revolution will be, and how successful it will be in putting an end to alliances with the capitalists, are questions for the near future to decide.

Sept. 19th, 1917.

¹ General Korniloff, commander-in-chief, who conspired with some members of the Kerensky Cabinet to march upon Petrograd for the suppression of the Soviets and the establishment of a military dictatorship. The attempt collapsed miserably, thanks to the energetic action of the Petrograd and Moscow workers.

II.—“ALL POWER TO THE SOVIETS.”

The most serious question of every revolution is plainly that of the governing power. Everything depends upon the question of what class holds that power. Now if the organ of the leading government party in Russia (Essers), the *Dielo Naroda* (“Cause of the People”) recently complained (No. 147) that in the struggle for power the questions of bread and the Constituent Assembly are forgotten, the obvious retort is: “Blame yourselves. It is the hesitancy, the irresolution of *your* party which is to blame for the continuous performance of Ministerial leap-frog—for the repeated postponement of the Constituent Assembly, for the undermining by the capitalists of the measures undertaken for the adequate control and distribution of the bread supply.

The question of the governing power can be neither obviated nor dismissed, for it is just this fundamental question which determines the development of the revolution, both in its external and internal policy. It certainly cannot be disputed that our revolution has lost in vain half a year squabbling over the establishment of power, but this is due to the vacillating policy of the Essers and Mensheviks. And this policy was in the last instance determined by the class standard of the petty bourgeoisie, by its economic instability in the struggle between labour and capital.

The question now is, whether or not the petty-bourgeois democracy has learned a lesson during this great half-year, so unusually rich in historical content. If not, then the revolution is lost, and only the victorious uprising of the working class can save it. If it has, it is imperative that steps be taken at once to construct a stable, unflinching power. Now, during a popular revolution—a revolution that has aroused the masses, the majority of the workmen and peasants—only that power can be stable which avowedly and unconditionally rests upon the *majority* of the population. Hitherto the governing power in Russia has been in fact in the hands of the capitalist class, which is forced now and then to make partial concessions, only

to withdraw them at the first opportunity. In words, it is a popular, democratic, revolutionary government; in deeds it is an anti-popular, anti-democratic, counter-revolutionary, capitalist government. This is the fatal contradiction that has heretofore been the source of the instability and fluctuation of power, of the "Ministerial leap-frog" so sedulously played by the Essers and Mensheviks to the detriment of the people.

Either rout the Soviets and let them die an ignominious death, or give all power to the Soviets—this I proclaimed before the All-Russian Congress of Soviets, in June, 1917, and the history of July and August has incontrovertibly borne out the correctness of that utterance. All power to the Soviets. This power alone can claim stability, inasmuch as it truly rests upon the majority of the population, in spite of all the lies spread broadcast by the lackeys of the capitalists, such as Potressoff, Plekhanoff,¹ etc., who, when the power is actually surrendered to an insignificant minority of the people—the capitalists and exploiters—call it "widening the base" of the government.

Only the Soviet power could be firm, the only power which it would be impossible to overthrow, even in stormiest moments of the most tempestuous revolution; only such a power could ensure the steady, ever-spreading development of the revolution, the peaceable struggle of the parties within the Soviets. So long as such a power is lacking, the inevitable consequences will be irresolution, instability, vacillation, endless "crises of power," the futile comedy of "Ministerial leap-frog," and outbursts from both left and right.

But the cry "All Power to the Soviets" is frequently, if not almost always, interpreted very incorrectly to mean: A Ministry recruited from the parties of the Soviet majority. We shall consider at length this highly-mistaken notion.

¹ Potressoff, a noted writer among the pro-war Mensheviks. Plekhanoff, the founder of the Russian Social-Democratic party, a man of international reputation, who became a "patriot" on the outbreak of the war. He died in 1918, abandoned by everybody, except a handful of followers.

A Ministry of the Soviet majority would mean only a personal change in the composition of the Ministry, leaving intact the entire old apparatus of the governing power, an apparatus thoroughly bureaucratic, incapable of carrying out any serious reforms, not even those found in the platforms of the Essers and the Mensheviks.

“All Power to the Soviets” means the thorough reconstruction of the whole State apparatus, the apparatus of antiquated officialdom which thwarts everything democratic; it means the removal of this apparatus and the substitution of a new, popular, really democratic apparatus of the Soviets, that is to-day, the organized and fully armed majority of the people—workers, soldiers and peasants. And, finally, it means full independence for the majority of the nation, not only in choosing delegates, but also in administering the State, and carrying out all necessary reforms.

In order to make the contrast more clear-cut and definite, we shall recall a very important confession made some time ago by the organ of the Government party, the Essers, *Dielo Narodu* (“Cause of the People”). “Even in the departments which are in the hands of the Socialist Ministers,” writes this paper at the time of the notorious “Coalition Ministry,” “even in these departments the whole administrative apparatus is antiquated, and obstructs works.”

That goes without saying. The history of the capitalist-parliamentary and the capitalist-constitutional countries shows that a change of Ministers means very little, for the real work of administration is lodged in the hands of a colossal army of officials, and this army is permeated with the anti-democratic spirit. By thousands and millions of threads it is connected with the landlords and the capitalists, and is dependent upon them in every way. This army breathes only the atmosphere of capitalist relations with which it is surrounded; it is congealed, shrivelled with age, stiff and inert; it is powerless to escape from this atmosphere, unable to think, feel or act otherwise than it has always acted. This army is imbued with admiration for rank, for certain privileges of “State” ser-

vice, and its upper strata are enslaved by stocks and bond to Financial Capital, in a measure acting as its direct agents, the executors of its interests and influence.

To attempt by means of *this* administrative apparatus the carrying out of such reforms as the redeemed confiscation of landed estates, the monopolizing of bread, etc., is a huge illusion, a deception of the people.

This apparatus can well serve a republican capitalist class, creating a republic in the form of a "monarchy without a monarch," after the fashion of the Third French Republic; but it is absolutely powerless to carry out reforms, not only ultra radical, but even such as would limit the rights of capital, the rights of "sacred private property." Thus in all "coalition" Ministries which include Socialists, the inevitable consequence is that the Socialists, however conscientious and personally irreproachable, remain in reality a mere screen for the capitalist government, a lightning rod to divert the popular indignation from the government, a tool by which to foil the masses. It was so with Louis Blanc in 1848, it has been so time and time again since then, in England and France when Socialists participated in the government; it was so too with Tchernoff and Tseretelli in 1917—and so it will be as long as the capitalist order exists and is supported by an outworn, capitalist bureaucratic administrative apparatus.

The Soviets of Workmen's, Soldiers' and Peasants' Delegates are invaluable for the very reason that they represent a new, incomparably higher, incomparably more democratic type of administrative apparatus. The Essers and Mensheviks did everything possible and impossible to convert the Soviets (particularly the Petrograd Soviet and the All-Russian Central Executive Committee) into mere talking machines, busy, under the pretence of "control," with formulating futile resolutions and humble petitions which the government disregarded in the most polite and affable manner. But the fresh breeze of the Korniloff rebellion, pregnant with threatening tempest, forced the Soviet to cast off for a time all that was obnoxious, and the initiative of the revolutionary masses loomed up as something majestic, powerful and invincible.

Let those who are weak of faith learn by this historic example. Shame upon those who say, "We have no apparatus with which to replace the old one, which invariably supports the capitalist class"; for we have such an apparatus—the Soviets. Fear not the initiative and independent action of the masses, have confidence in the revolutionary organizations of the masses, and in all departments of the State you will behold the force, the magnificence, the invincibility of the workmen and peasants, which they showed in their enthusiastic solidarity against the Korniloff uprising.

Distrusting the masses, fearing their initiative and independence, trembling at their revolutionary energy instead of enthusiastically and unreservedly supporting it—this was the greatest sin of the Essers and Mensheviks. Here can be found the root-cause of their irresolution, their vacillation, their endless and endlessly fruitless attempts to pour new wine into the bottles of the old bureaucratic apparatus.

Read the history of the democratization of the Russian army in the Russian revolution of 1917, the history of Tchernoff's Ministry, the history of the Palchinsky, the history of Peshekhonoff's resignation—you will find at every step the most instructive substantiation of this fact. The fact that there was no complete confidence in the elected soldiers' organizations, no full realization of the principle of election of officers by the soldiers themselves, enabled the Korniloffs, Kaledins and counter-revolutionary officers to be at the head of the army. This is a fact. And whoever does not wantonly shut his eyes cannot help seeing that after the Korniloff affair the Kerensky government left everything as it was—that, in reality, it restored Korniloff's rule. The appointment of Alexeieff, the pact with the Klembovskis, Gagarins, Bagrattions and other Korniloff followers, the kindly treatment accorded to the Korniloffs and Kaledins—all this shows how Kerensky was restoring the Korniloff rule.

Experience teaches that there is no middle course possible. Either all the power to the Soviets and the complete democratization of the army, or—Korniloff.

And the history of Tchernoff? Wasn't the greatest enthusiasm aroused among the peasants by any step, however small, toward the real satisfaction of their needs—every step which attested confidence in them, and in their mass organizations and mass actions? But for four months Tchernoff was compelled again and again to “bargain” with the Cadets and the bureaucrats, who with their everlasting protractions and underhanded tactics finally forced him to leave without having accomplished anything. The landlords and capitalists, “having won the game,” held back the Constituent Assembly, and even started a series of repressive measures against the Land Committees.

Experience teaches that there is no middle course possible. Either all power to the Soviets, centrally and locally, all the land to the peasants at once, before the decision of the Constituent Assembly, or the landlords and capitalists will thwart everything, restore the rule of the landlords, arouse the resentment of the peasants, and so aggravate the situation as to cause a regrettably violent agrarian revolt.

It is the same story with the capitalists, who prevent any serious control over production, the merchants preventing the State control of the bread supply, and even attempts to establish the principle of its regulated democratic distribution.

In Russia the question now is not to invent new reforms, or to undertake cherished transformations. Nothing of the kind. Yet that is how the question is put—and put knowingly and falsely by the capitalists, who protest against the “introduction of Socialism” and the “dictatorship of the working class.” In reality, the situation in Russia is such that the unequalled sufferings of the war, the imminent danger of famine, have themselves dictated the way out, have themselves pointed out the imperative necessity of these reforms: bread monopoly, control of production and distribution, the limitation of the issue of paper money, regular exchange of bread for commodities, etc.

Measures of this kind and their realization are universally acknowledged to be inevitable. They have been begun in many places and in widely different ways, and everywhere their realization is obstinately resisted by the landlords and capitalists, aided by the Kerensky government—a thoroughly bourgeois and Bonapartist government.

I. Prilezhaieff recently wrote in the *Dielo Naroda* ("Cause of the People," No. 147), lamenting the resignation of Peshekhonoff, the failure of price-fixing and the collapse of the bread monopoly:—"Courage and resolution—that is what all our governments, of whatever complexion, have lacked. . . . The revolutionary democracy need not hesitate; it should take the initiative itself, and intervene in the economic chaos. . . . Here, if anywhere at all, a firm policy and resolute power are indispensable."

Yes, what is true is certainly true! Golden words. It has not, however, occurred to the author that the question of a firm policy, of a daring spirit, of determination, is not a question of personalities, but a question of the class that is capable of daring and decisive action. The only such class is the working class. With the daring and resoluteness of power, its unflinching policy is nothing less than the dictatorship of the working class, including the poorest peasants. I. Prilezhaieff, without being conscious of it, craves that very dictatorship.

What would such dictatorship mean? Nothing less than that the resistance of the Korniloff followers would be overcome, and the complete democratization of the army accomplished. Nine-nine per cent. of the army would declare themselves ardent adherents of this dictatorship two days after its realization. This dictatorship would give the land to the peasants and full power to the peasants' local committees; how can any sane man doubt that the peasants would support such a dictatorship? What Peshekhonov only imagined ("the resistance of the capitalists is broken," he said before the Soviets), this dictatorship would convert into reality without the least harm to the newly-established democratic organizations for food supply, industrial control, etc. On the contrary,

it would support and defend them, while removing all obstacles from their path.

Only the dictatorship of the working class and the poor peasants is capable of breaking the resistance of the capitalists, of manifesting a truly majestic courage and resoluteness of power, of securing to itself the enthusiastic, loyal and heroic support of the army masses and the peasant masses.

All power to the Soviets—the sole power which can render further evolution gradual, peaceful and tranquil, proceeding in perfect accord with the level of consciousness and decision exhibited by the majority of the popular masses—in perfect accord with the level of their own experience. All power to the Soviets—this means a complete surrender of the administration of the country and of control over its economic resources to the workmen and peasants, whom no one would dare to resist, and who would soon learn by experience, from their own practice, justly to distribute the bread, the land, and the necessities of life.

III. WHAT ARE THE SOVIETS ?

Of the many terms in which social and political sciences abound, the term "people" is perhaps the vaguest. Indeed, we have no clear-cut image and hence no effective idea of this apparently concrete entity "People." Intimately connected with this term, no less vague and still more confusing, is the word "government," a word depicting a reality as concrete and as hard as the age-old rocks themselves. The relation, however, obtaining between these two realities is in one respect clear; *inasmuch as all the power of a people is vested in its government, the people is divested of all power*, — a relation so typically and, as it were, monumentally expressed in the cry, "The State, I am the State," desperately uttered by the head of the French government during the period of its ultimate decay.

The Russian Revolution, now occupying the centre of the quaking world's stage, allows the careful observer to catch a glimpse of what that entity People really must be. The Russian people, struggling to assert itself, has in the travail of the Revolution given birth to a new creation, flexible, mobile, and yet persistent as are the thought and will it expresses. This creation is the Soviets.

The trumpets of the March revolution, 1917, brought down the Romanoff dynasty, and the rejoicing of the Russian people knew no bounds. But the events immediately following had a sobering effect upon the masses. The first burning question arose: "Is the Revolution safe?" As the embodied answer to this question, sprang up the Soviet, a revolutionary creation, a child of the people's awakening consciousness. City, town and village as well as each unit of the army, all formed their local Soviets to safeguard the Revolution.

These local organs, always functioning and therefore always reflecting the thoughts, desires and will of the small communities they represent, send delegates to the capital, who form the Central Executive Committee of all the Soviets of Workmen's, Soldiers' and Peasants' Delegates. The election to the central body is carried out on

the is of party lines, so that the central Executive Committee has always represented all the various currents and even undercurrents of the Russian Revolution.

Soon after the overthrow of Tsardom, the people felt that the newly-formed Provisional Government of Lvoff-Rodzianko-Miliakoff¹ did not intend to deviate from the general policies of the old regime. This popular feeling imparted itself to the local Soviets, which resulted in the second question: "Who is the friend and who is the foe?" In other words, the Soviet was forced to explain the sense of the Revolution. The first answer was a fermentation within the Soviets, reflecting the people's questioning mind, and this fermentation ended in the cleavage of the Soviet forces. Materially the split manifested itself in the first "coalition government," headed by Kerensky.

This second question was made more vital and insistent by the Korniloff uprising. It grew more and more obvious to the people that the "coalition government" was merely an expression of the old order under a new name. In response to the growing popular unrest, the rift in the Soviet deepened; whatever elements irresistibly tended to the right were pushed out by popular pressure upon the left, and the result was the July insurrection. The Soviet thus emphasised the popular interpretation of the sense of the Revolution. It is not merely a *political* revolution, but an *economico-social* revolution, and whoever thwarts its course is the people's enemy.

But if indeed this is the historical sense of the Revolution, then arises a third question:—By Whom and How shall the issues of the Revolution be promoted and realised in life? Of course by the People, and by the power which expresses the People—by the Soviets. Such was the categorical answer given by the November uprising, which

¹ Lvoff (Prince), a moderate Liberal, head of the First Provisional and of the First Coalition Governments. Rodzianko, a rich landowner and nobleman, an "Octobrist" and last President of the Duma. Prof. Miliakoff, the well-known leader of the "Cadets."

er put an end to the policy of coalition and alliances
 e real Revolution with the representatives of the
 ying old order. Thus by a process of elimination the
 Soviet was finally purified of elements leaning toward the
 right; a process which showed that, as the individual
 hesitates before making his choice and stamping as his
 will one or the other of the ideas conflicting in his mind,
 so the Russian people hesitated before it found and ex-
 pressed its conscious will. And the Soviet made all this
 possible.

In brief, these are the three phases passed through by
 the Soviet—from birth to manhood:—(1) It issued from
 the very heart of the people as *guardian of the Revolution*; (2) While growing, it served as the pendulum—the *inter-
 preter of the Revolution*, (3) Fully matured as the volitional
 and intellectual organ of its parent, the people, it became
 the *instrument for realising the issues of the Revolution*.

The superiority of the Soviet over any other form of
 representation is easily demonstrable. All governments
 pretend to represent the will of the people. Now granted
 (for the sake of argument) that a people's will is as real as
 the will of an individual, and that it is the sum or resultant
 of the sundry wills composing it, it is manifest that no
 representative body can satisfactorily execute this com-
 posite will.

As a matter of fact, the will of an individual is not easily
 satisfied by proxy. So that it may be tersely stated that
 the efficacy of a representative is inversely proportional
 to the numerical strength of the constituency represented.

Viewed from this angle it is obvious why an order of
 things that has become detrimental to the people at large
 can be perpetuated by a "representative" government
 which has degenerated into a tool of the *invisible govern-
 ment*. The history of the War is very instructive in this,
 as in many other respects. It is now clear as day how the
invisible power, the class owning and dominating the
 economic apparatus in all countries, owned also the repre-

government, and through it tried to perpetuate
 anarchy, financial speculation, capitalist exploita-
 tion of the masses, all factors inevitably leading to both
 internal and external wars—and all this in the name of
 the people.

In the first place, the Soviet is a *local* body, of the people and with the people. A member of the Soviet represents no more than about *five hundred votes*. He can be at any time replaced; he is always in sight—no invisibles allowed. Furthermore, the Soviet works “centripetally”—the central body is controlled by the local constituent bodies. In this respect the Soviet government may be compared to a central meteorological bureau, whose usefulness and efficacy, whose very reason for existence is determined by the workings of the local weather bureau.

Indeed, history seems to show mankind a new form of State organisation which closely approaches the demands of the people, and corresponds with the new order of things ushered in by the Russian Revolution.

These last few days have brought here (in Petrograd) face to face these two types of representation—on one hand, the Constituent Assembly, in which one man represents 200,000 wills, and on the other, the All-Russian Soviets, those direct guards, interpreters and promoters of the social revolution, whose each member is so closely connected with the very pulse of the people. The dissolution of the Constituent Assembly by the power of the Soviets stirred no ripple on the faces of the immense sea of the Russian masses; while the threatened curtailment of the powers of the Soviets, two months previously, destroyed the Provisional Government.

The Soviet, being close to the people, must express realities literally, as the people itself expresses them.

The Soviet is probably the most important contribution of the Russian Revolution.

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