

BOLSHEVISM AT A DEADLOCK

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BOLSHEVISM AT A DEADLOCK

by

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P R E F A C E

When I began to write this book, the *Kolhosi* controversy was already causing great excitement in Soviet Russia.

Nothing has happened since to induce me to change my statements. The most important event in Soviet Russia since the publication of the original German edition of this book is undoubtedly the monstrous comedy of the Moscow trial which began on November 25, 1930. It was directed against eight engineers, who were most unusually anxious not only to denounce themselves as counter-revolutionaries and wreckers but also as unprincipled rascals.

This trial clearly proved to anybody who could see, and who wished to see, that Stalin and his associates expect the Five Year Plan to be a failure, and that they are already seeking for scapegoats on whom to put the blame.

This trial, however, has not helped the present rulers of Soviet Russia; it has made their position only more precarious. If anything, it drew attention to the deep abyss which yawns between them and the majority of the engineers and other intellectuals in the State. It also showed the hatred and mistrust of the rulers towards the best brains of Russia, and laid bare the system of spying, the policy of allowing no independence, and of making it impossible for the brainworkers to enjoy their work and use their own initiative. The trial itself has not increased the hatred and mistrust of the ruling classes, but has stirred up the working masses

against the intellectuals. It has, at the same time, deepened the anxiety and the sense of dependence felt by the intellectuals, and has thus rendered them unsuitable for any responsible posts in productive occupations. Without them, however, Russian economy cannot be raised to a higher level, it cannot even be maintained at its present level.

For the prosperity of a modern community many intellectuals of independent spirit and a high standard of efficiency who are prepared to serve the community loyally and devotedly are needed in addition to skilled manual workers. In Russia, Czarism has always tried to prevent such an intelligentsia from coming into being. In spite of all obstacles, it did spring up, even in those days, although it was numerically unimportant. Bolshevism classed intellectuals as "bourgeois", unless they adopted Communism, non-communistic intellectuals were either killed or rendered innocuous.

By this policy, the Bolsheviks are crippling the big industries of the country, no matter how many they may try to develop.

During the last few months the Communist Press has been giving the proudest figures regarding the progress that has occurred in Russian industry in accordance with the Five Year Plan.

This Plan is based, as is well known, on a reduction of the already scanty consumption of the Russian population to a quite insupportable minimum of food-stuffs and cultural necessities, leaving only just enough to keep body and soul together. The deficiency of goods produced as compared with goods consumed, which had led to the impoverishment of the State and the

populace, is to be remedied by curtailing consumption, in order to leave a surplus with which to pay for the construction of new factories, power stations, machinery and other means of production. At the end of the five years, a new and industrialised Russia is to arise, which will be highly productive. The recent misery is to change into happiness and luxury; the Russian nation is to tower above all other nations. The five years of utter poverty and depravity are nothing but a transition period, or Purgatory as the Catholics call it, leading to the everlasting bliss of Paradise.

The idea that it was possible to lead a nation from direst misery to abundance by making it undergo a drastic starvation cure seemed too naïve, and I did not consider it worth while to say much about it. Lately, however, I have noticed that men for whose knowledge of Economics I have the greatest respect have been taken in by Soviet statistics, and actually consider the Five Year Plan to be feasible. Hence the necessity for a few supplementary remarks.

It is unnecessary to say much about Soviet statistics, which are always unreliable when they are optimistic. Let us grant that the Five Year Plan has succeeded in squeezing out of the starving masses of Russia some surplus goods which can be sold abroad, the purchase money being used to acquire machinery and erect new buildings. This surplus has certainly not been as large as that promised in the Plan, for that is impossible. It has been realised to a certain degree, but this does not mean that it will be possible to increase production to such an extent that the bankruptcy threatening the whole Soviet economy can be averted.

The Bolsheviks claim to be the truest, or, rather, the only true disciples of Karl Marx. Their Marxism is unfortunately confined to regarding the works of Marx as Holy Writ, and searching for certain sentences which they interpret in their own way. They ignore the Marxism which applies critically the Marxian method based upon a strict and conscientious examination of present-day phenomena.

As true Marxists, they should feel quite at home in the second volume of *Das Kapital*, where Marx says that in order to prevent the disorganisation of the economic structure the different branches of production must always be in true proportion to one another in accordance with the existing technical and social conditions. Certain means of production must be used in producing goods for personal consumption. Of these, a certain percentage must be used in the production of foodstuffs, and another percentage in producing goods of cultural value. A second large group of means of production must be used for manufacturing new means of production and renewing worn-out equipment.

What is the essence of the Five Year Plan? Nothing but upsetting the balance between the various branches of production. The Plan curtails the production of many goods destined for home consumption. If a country grows corn in order to exchange it for machinery, it has not produced consumption goods for the country, but production goods as far as the home market is concerned. The output of consumption goods is reduced, and the output of production goods is expanded. Only when the expansion has attained a

high degree will the production of consumption goods be correspondingly increased.

The output of means of production has not been increased equally in all branches. Some branches are favourably treated while others are neglected. In erecting new industrial centres in Soviet Russia, particular attention has been paid to military needs rather than to the requirements of production. The main object of the Soviet Government when building up new industries has been to assure independence from foreign industry in time of war. This is one of the chief reasons why heavy industries are so much favoured. *Izvestia* says that many works which are used for peaceful purposes can easily be converted to the manufacture of guns, tanks, and similar instruments of war.

On the other hand, Soviet Russia seems to have forgotten that the means of transport are among the indispensable means of production. The process of production requires not only a transformation of the raw material, but also the moving of the materials.

It is surprising how the reports about the erection of new plant on a large scale go hand in hand with reports concerning the decline of the railway system. Only lately, on January 5, 1931, the Moscow *Ekonomicheskaya Zhisn*, a leading paper on Russian economic policy, published a long article dealing with the "malady" of the transport system, which is attributed to the insufficient feeding of the railwaymen.

"According to the reports of the Commissariat for Communications, the goods awaiting despatch amounted to around 50,000 wagons on January 9, as compared

with 3,514 wagons on the same day of the previous year." At the same time, the number of broken-down engines has increased, and repairs have always been defective. "In October and November, only 57 per cent. of the broken-down engines were repaired. Only 4 per cent. of the trucks provided for in the Plan to be built during October and November were actually produced in the shops of the Commissariat for Communication."

What is the use of enormous quantities of new means of production if the means of transport decline? How is it possible to provide industry with greater quantities of raw material and fuel, and to deliver the finished article to the consumer? According to reports of the *R.S.D.* (Bulletin of the Russian Social Democrats) of January 22, 1931, the production of textiles in Soviet Russia in 1930 was lower than in the previous year because there was a shortage of raw material, and a number of works had to shut down for six weeks. We shall not be far wrong if we ascribe this state of affairs mainly to the decline of the railway system.

Yet more serious results must arise out of the strict limitation of consumable goods which is enforced in order to provide money for the purchase of new and the extension of existing means of production. What the capitalists of Europe and America are doing under the pressure of the present crisis, i.e. reducing wages in order to increase profits and accumulate more capital, the Soviet rulers are doing systematically on the basis of their Five Year Plan, thanks to their excessive power over the workers. What the capitalists are doing in this direction is mere child's play compared with the

happenings in Soviet Russia. There, although wages are not coming down to the same extent, the prices of all consumable goods are rising to such fantastic heights that the masses are perishing of famine and squalor.

The reduction of consumption does not concern the consumer alone, it also affects production. All consumers are not necessarily producers, but all producers must also be consumers. Not only the sale of goods, but as well the productive capacity of the nation, varies according to the volume of goods consumed.

Labour is the most important agent of production, for it puts the productive machinery into motion and makes it function. Without labour, each machine would be so much old iron; each factory would be a mere mass of bricks and mortar. This fact is very often overlooked, but nowhere more so than in Soviet Russia, where they imagine that by trebling the number of the existing machines within five years, the output of industry can also be trebled in this short period. They do not ask how it is possible within the space of five years to treble the number of skilled workers, foremen, and engineers who are needed for tending the machinery. On the contrary, the Soviet leaders would think themselves very clever and economical if they found means of trebling the number of available machines by the adoption of methods which reduce the productive capacity, intelligence and independence of the existing industrial workers to a minimum. They have failed to realise that the vital problem is to raise the efficiency of labour, and that the products of labour would then yield a surplus automatically, while such a policy

would at the same time increase the capacity for turning out new and improved means of production.

The Bolsheviks would not profit by recognising this, for this method of increasing the productive capacity of the workers presupposes a high degree of freedom, and this requires a far-reaching democracy. I hope that this book will explain the reason why the Bolsheviks cannot allow such freedom without bringing about their own downfall.

A characteristic of the Russian autocracy was the contempt shown by its representatives for the people over whom they ruled, and whom they knew only as trembling slaves without any will of their own. For this reason the rulers continually imagined that they could equal or even surpass rich and powerful Western Europe, by adopting its technical methods without that freedom which alone made the success of the pioneers and organisers possible, and which alone encouraged the existence of those hard-working, efficient and highly skilled workers on whom the superior technique and economic organisation of the West are based. Not one of the autocrats who desired to give Russia a superior position in the world, from Peter the Great to Lenin and Stalin, has realised this.

What Napoleon I said of these autocrats is, then, still true to-day: "Scratch them, and you find the Tartar." They are utterly unable to build up a form of State and productive organisation equal, much less superior, to that prevalent in Europe. The greater their attempts in this direction, the greater the fall which must follow their failure.

The extent to which the dearth of skilled workers

who are more than mere common labourers limits the utilisation of the newly acquired means of production is shown by the following information, published in *Pravda* (Moscow), the official organ of the Communist Party in Soviet Russia. Three large factories for the production of tractors have been built in the Russian State, viz. at Leningrad, Stalingrad, and Charkoff. According to the Plan, these were to produce 2,370 tractors during the month of January. According to *Pravda* of January 12th, in the first five days of the month they only produced nine daily. That would mean not quite 300 per month, namely less than 13 per cent. of the number laid down in the Plan.

Thus, not even the *quantity* laid down in the Plan has been attained. I have given full particulars in the book itself as regards the *quality* of the goods produced in accordance with the Plan.

I do not point this out with triumph and malicious joy, but with deep distress, for the immediate effect of the bankruptcy of the Five Year Plan will be felt above all by the masses of the Russian people, by the peasants and workers, by the engineers, teachers, doctors, and scientists. The Communists are the last who will feel the effect of the evil. What separates us from them is not the goal which they wish to attain by means of the Five Year Plan, for this aims at raising Russia to a higher level and increasing the well-being of her people. What I particularly reproach them for, even more than for the revolting methods they are employing, is that they will not reach this goal, and that their Plan will achieve one thing only, i.e. the consolidation and strengthening of the foundation upon which it is built,

namely the wholesale pauperisation and degradation of the Russian people.

This is not the first time I have had to state with deep regret that the methods of Soviet Russian Communism must achieve exactly the opposite result from the one promised. I was in a similar position during the last few weeks of 1917 and the first weeks of the following year, at the time when the Bolsheviks promised to set up the dictatorship of the Soviets—meaning neither the dictatorship of the Communist Party nor that of the proletariat alone, but the dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasants. It was anticipated that a Socialist community would spring up directly from this dictatorship.

At that time, almost all my political friends were filled with enthusiasm about what was happening. How willingly would I have joined them!

I said to myself: "If Lenin is right, then my whole life's work devoted to the propagation, application and further development of the ideas of my great masters, Marx and Engels, has been in vain." I knew, of course, that Lenin wanted to be the most orthodox of the Marxists. But if he succeeded in attaining his goal and fulfilling his promises, it would prove that social development does not progress in accordance with iron laws, and that it is wrong to believe a modern, powerful Socialism can only come into being where highly developed industrial capitalism has created an equally developed industrial proletariat.

The Marxists in Russia had vehemently maintained this opinion. In this they disagreed with the other Russian Socialists who held that the common ownership

of land, as it existed in the Russian village, although fast disappearing, facilitates the building up of a Socialist community in Russia more than in any other country.

The Marxists opposed this view as being Utopian. They were convinced that the revolution which they were expecting in Russia could do nothing but open up the way for a complete development of capitalism, and that only when the latter had attained a high degree of development would a Socialist community be possible. Thus the countries of industrialised Western Europe would have to precede the countries of Eastern Europe on the road towards Socialism.

Until the Revolution of 1917, Lenin himself was of the same opinion as the other Marxists. And then the unexpected happened. At one stroke, unforeseen circumstances delivered the complete control of the State into the hands of Lenin, who until then had been an outlawed refugee having to hide whenever he went to Russia. This dazzling turn of fortune went to his head and made him reverse his former theoretical convictions. He suddenly became of the opinion that the extremely small, backward stratum of the industrial workers of Russia was capable of plunging at once into Socialism and organising a Socialist State. This, he considered, was only possible if it allowed itself to be led by a small group of daring spirits like Lenin and his followers—the Bolsheviks.

If they succeeded in realising their expectations and promises it would have meant a tremendous success for both themselves and the Russian people. The Marxist theory could no longer be supported. It was proved wrong, but it had, on the other hand, prepared a bril-

liant triumph for Socialism, viz. they had taken the road to the immediate removal of all distress and ignorance of the masses in Russia and showed it to the rest of the world.

I would have been only too glad to believe that it was possible! Too glad to have been convinced! The strongest and best founded theory must give way when it is refuted by deeds—real deeds—not merely by plans and promises.

Although doubtful, I still watched the first steps of Bolshevism with friendly eyes. I considered it impossible for them immediately to establish Socialism as they imagined they could. They were, however, sharp-witted, intelligent people and they had attained great power. I thought they might perhaps succeed in finding a new method for raising the working classes from which the peoples of Western Europe might be able to learn.

My hopes were soon shattered. Sadly I saw, ever more clearly, that the Bolsheviks completely misunderstood the situation; that they thoughtlessly set themselves a task for the fulfilment of which all the necessary conditions were lacking, and that in their endeavour to achieve the impossible by brute force they were employing means which, instead of improving the economic, intellectual and moral position of the working masses, were undermining it more than Czarism and the War had already done.

I considered it as my duty to warn the Bolsheviks emphatically not to continue this policy. I did so during the War, in the summer of 1918, in the pamphlet *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat* (Vienna). I considered that I was entitled to sound the note of warning, as

apart from my connections with German and Austrian Democracy, my closest connections were with Russian Social Democracy. I have been in close relationship with the Russian refugees since 1880, and have had the good fortune to count the founders of Russian Social Democracy amongst my friends; particularly Axelrod, Plechanoff, Vera Sassulich, and Leo Deutsch. The younger generation of Russian Social Democrats have done me the honour of counting me, together with Plechanoff and Axelrod, amongst their teachers.

Most of them also became my personal friends—on the one hand Martoff, Dan, Abramovich, etc., and on the other hand Lenin, Trotzky, Rakovsky, etc., with whom Parvus and Rosa Luxemburg were at times closely connected. This close and intimate relationship with my Russian friends and disciples, which has lasted for over half a century, was of the greatest advantage for me. It is to these friendships in particular that I owe my insight into Russian conditions.

The time had come for me to render thanks to my Russian friends for what I had learnt from them, and to participate in their heated discussions regarding the policy to be followed. I did so to ease my conscience, and not because I expected any practical results. How could a single German pamphlet published in Vienna, in the midst of the War, have any effect in Petrograd and Moscow? Most of the Bolsheviks heard nothing about it. Even if they had read my pamphlet, it could have had no effect. They could no longer go back, without abandoning their own cause. The logic of facts was always stronger than the logic of ideas.

Many of my political friends in Germany and

Austria also disapproved of my hostile attitude towards Bolshevism. They thought it possible that the Bolsheviks might carry out their programme, and asked that they should not be disturbed or discouraged in the attempt. Measures which I considered to be absolutely wrong, to be fatal mistakes, appeared to them to be mere black patches due either to the temporary effects of the War or to the price which must always be paid for buying experience; as children's ailments, in fact.

The ulterior policy pursued by the Bolsheviks, however, confirmed the opinion I had formed based on the events of the first six months and on my theoretical knowledge. I upheld this point of view in the summer of 1919 in my book, *Terrorism and Communism*. When Trotzky published in reply a pamphlet under the same title, in the following year, I replied in 1921 by a pamphlet entitled *From Democracy to State-Slavery*. This met with no opposition from my political friends, among whom the Bolsheviks were naturally no longer included after 1918. Only in one point these friends could not—and many of them still cannot—decide to agree with me, to wit, that the actual functions although not the actual intentions of the Bolsheviks have become counter-revolutionary.

Only my friend Axelrod, whom I mentioned before, has agreed with me from the very beginning. Independently of me, he had arrived at the same conclusions. Of all the Russian Social Democrats, he has always been the one nearest to my way of thinking. Occasionally I differed on one or another point from other Social Democrats, even from my best friends. That is natural. There was never any difference of opinion between Axelrod and me. Our conception of

Bolshevism was always the same. This dear friend passed away in 1928. I consider the writing of this book to be a legacy of his. It is only a continuation and completion of the publications already mentioned, which I wrote in the first three years of the Bolshevik régime. These were years of war for Bolshevism. The decade of peace that has since passed has not embellished its face. On the contrary. There are, however, some Socialists in Europe and America who believe that it is yet too soon to form a definite judgment. We should wait and see what this year will bring forth. The Bolsheviks themselves consider this as the most critical year of the Five Year Plan. If it proves a success, the road is open to the Millennium. If it proves to be a failure, collapse is inevitable.

When in the summer of 1929 an editor of the *Frankfurter Zeitung* (Feiler) was in Russia studying economic conditions, a leading Communist said to him:

“We must carry out the Five Year Plan, otherwise we shall be thrown out.”

That is the real position. This is the progress which has been made since the first years of Bolshevism. Then the Bolsheviks still believed in themselves and in their overwhelming force. Therefore, the Communist Party kept well together. To-day, the number of members guilty of “deviating” to the right or to the left is growing. These are people who recognise that it cannot go on any longer in this fashion and that this road leads to an abyss. But the mere recognition of this fact does not mean that they know of a better way. In the early years they were still confident that if it would not work

in this way, it would work in another way; but work it must. To-day, they are already saying that if it will not work with the Five Year Plan, it will not work at all.

Is it still necessary to wait and see what this year will bring forth in order to forecast the prospects of the Bolsheviks? Are the theoretical principles which Marx and Engels laid down, which were studied with constant diligence by them and their disciples for three generations, and the thirteen years' experience of Bolshevik rule not sufficient? Must we really wait this year, in order to foretell the outcome?

What kind of social structure is it, the vitality of which depends on the chance happenings of one year?

One would think that merely pointing out this one critical year of the Five Year Plan would suffice to show each politician, each Socialist, and each philanthropist that Russia's collapse is near, and that it is very necessary for each of them to consider what attitude he is going to adopt. Nobody can imagine that such a terrible event will happen without having a far-reaching effect on the rest of the world. It is in the most urgent interest of the whole civilised world that good care is taken that democracy rises victoriously from the chaos which will ensue if Bolshevism collapses. This democracy can only be evolved by the democratic elements of Russia itself. Foreign intervention can only do harm. Democracy in Russia, however, will grow the stronger if it enjoys the increased confidence of the workers and peasants, that is to say, if it increasingly represents their interests. Its strength will also increase as it becomes less split nationally and as

the warmer and more active sympathy of democratic elements in foreign countries becomes more evident.

The Labour parties of all countries, united in the Labour and Socialist International, have always been aware of the importance of events in Russia in connection with the struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat all over the world.

However, the possible collapse of Russia, and the problems resulting from it, are not universally taken into consideration. If the following pages succeed in awakening greater interest in these problems they will have achieved their purpose.

K. KAUTSKY

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