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**THE RUSSIAN  
REVOLUTION**

From 1905 to the present day

by

R. PAGE ARNOT

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A SHORT HISTORY OF THE  
RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

*From 1905 to the present day*

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NEW PEOPLE'S LIBRARY

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A SHORT HISTORY OF THE  
RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

*From 1905 to the present day*

by

R. PAGE ARNOT

VOLUME TWO

From February 1917 to the present day

LONDON

VICTOR GOLLANCZ LTD

1937

*Printed in Great Britain by*  
**The Camelot Press Ltd , London and Southampton**

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# CHAPTER I

## FROM FEBRUARY TO OCTOBER 1917

### I. THE FEBRUARY REVOLUTION

**T**HE FEBRUARY REVOLUTION began, according to our reckoning, on March 13th (for, up till 1917, the old antiquated calendar had persisted under the Greek Orthodox Church) It began in Petrograd—the name given to St. Petersburg in 1914 and for ten years thereafter—with a strike movement of the working-class population who were threatened with starvation by a failure of the bread supply. Regiments sent to suppress the strikers joined the revolt. The frantic efforts of the general commanding the Petrograd area, the frantic telegrams of the Tsar ordering suppression, had no result. Within a few hours the Tsardom collapsed. A change of monarch or a regency was advocated by the Duma Right Wing groups, headed by Rodzianko. The Tsar's brother, Michael, was proposed. Overtures were made to the former commander-in-chief, the Tsar's uncle, the Grand Duke Nikolai Nicholaevitch, but events moved too quickly under the pressure of the masses for any such compromise. A Provisional Government was hurriedly got together from the capitalist Duma parties. Within a few days this Government was recognised by the Allied Powers, who had been hoping



## FROM FEBRUARY TO OCTOBER 1917

that the Russian capitalists would conduct the war more vigorously than the Court Ministers of the Tsar. The liquidation of Tsarist Russia had begun.

From the moment when the curtain falls on the sombre drama of Tsardom, the stage becomes crowded with actors, and events succeed one another with breathless rapidity. To present even a summarised description of this is impossible. All that can be done is to make clear what were the decisive factors and chief tendencies in the revolution as it proceeded, and to enumerate the more salient events which throw light upon these tendencies.

In the first place, the Tsardom, heading the feudal landlords, the old bureaucracy, and the military caste, was overthrown so quickly by the revolution as the result of a unique historical situation. The deep movement of the poverty-stricken mass of the people, workers and peasants, was against the Tsar in order to get *peace*, as well as bread and real freedom. The Russian bourgeoisie, on the other hand, impelled and aided by the Anglo-French imperialists, were out to seize power for the purpose of *continuing the war* and waging it more fiercely and obstinately. Thus absolutely contrary political and social movements and class interests merged in a whirlpool that quickly overwhelmed the Tsardom. In the second place, the relations between the Provisional Government and the Soviets must be understood. The workers who had made the revolution and who had organised themselves in Soviets were not the Government. The Government were the capitalists of Russia; but these capitalists had to admit the existence of the Soviets. In short, the revolution had established a Dual Power.

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What did this mean? It meant there were two Governments. One Government, holding State power, was the Government of the capitalists and the landlords who had turned capitalist. To that extent the bourgeois-democratic revolution had been carried through. The other Government, a supplementary and parallel Government, took the shape of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, holding no organs of State power but resting on the authority of the vast majority of the people of Russia, *including the armed forces*. Two things had happened at once. The February Revolution had swept away the Tsarist monarchy and transferred power to the bourgeoisie, but, at the same time, it had to come very near to a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry, represented by the Soviets. These Soviets were of a mainly working-class character in the towns. They were drawn, for the most part, from the natural groupings of the workers in the factories and workshops; and, as the delegates sat for short periods, the Soviets were able to express directly and within a short time any change of attitude amongst the masses of the workers. The Soviets of Peasants' Deputies and the Soviets of Soldiers' Deputies were similarly constructed. The Soviets had emerged as an instrument of working-class democracy during the 1905 Revolution, in their re-emergence in 1917 we see the same feature of flexibility and vigour. In all their work there was a high degree of improvisation, and this enabled them to embody the whole of the masses in a rapidly changing situation in a way that was impossible for a static or rigid institution.

The third peculiarity of the situation was that the

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Soviets, though the mainspring of the revolution, did not feel sufficient confidence in themselves to take over power. They submitted themselves to the leadership of persons drawn, in the main, from the middle-class parties of the Duma. The Duma had been completely unrepresentative, the aggregate of peasants' and workers' votes counted for less than the votes of the wealthy classes and the nobility, and any Government formed from it might have been discounted from the outset. Hence it was termed a Provisional Government, and it was generally understood that the first acceptable Government of a Tsarless Russia would be formed through the summoning of a Constituent Assembly. This meant that the Soviets were voluntarily surrendering the power of the State and the supremacy which was theirs to the bourgeoisie and its Provisional Government. This was an extremely peculiar circumstance, which, as Lenin said, led to the *interlocking of two dictatorships*—the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie (the Provisional Government) and the dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry (the Soviets). Now, such a situation could not last. Two powers cannot co-exist in a single State. The capitalists were well aware of this, and, from the very first days, were straining every nerve to reduce the Soviets to a minor role, to enfeeble them, and to establish the sole power of the bourgeoisie.

The February Revolution had gone beyond the ordinary bourgeois-democratic revolution but had not reached the advanced type of bourgeois-democratic revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry. The bourgeoisie were striving to pull it back, apparently with the acquiescence of the majority

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leaders of the Soviets. The cause of this peculiarity, and also the reason why the hesitant Mensheviks<sup>1</sup> and Social-Revolutionaries had received the majority in the Soviets, was as follows: the abdication of the Tsar had awakened to life tens of millions who had been politically asleep and suffering under the oppression of years. All the small business-men, small proprietors, peasants—in a word, the petty-bourgeoisie—had awakened and hailed the morning of the revolution, believing that an unclouded day had begun. A tidal wave of liberated petty-bourgeois feelings, of innocent, trusting sentiment for freedom, had swept over Russia, temporarily engulfing the majority of the working class. But, since the petty-bourgeoisie up till then had always depended upon the bourgeoisie, the capitalists, they were prepared trustfully to surrender to the guidance of the capitalists. This unreasoning confidence was the main explanation of this peculiarity, historically unparalleled, of the Dual Power.

<sup>1</sup> It has also to be remembered that (1) the Mensheviks, being "patriotic," enjoyed more legality and were at this moment better known to the masses than the Bolsheviks, who had been drafted to the army (where many were killed) or shut away from sight in prison or Siberia, (2) masses raw from the villages had entered the factories, including many kulak types who preferred work in munition factories to military service, (3) the Petrograd Soviet had one delegate per thousand from the workers in large factories, while small workshops each had also one delegate, with the result that, though 87 per cent of the Petrograd working class was in large factories, their vote in the Soviet totalled only 120, as against the 122 votes exercised by the minority from the small workshops, comprising 13 per cent of the working class—and, of course, it is in small workshops that the influence of the petty-bourgeoisie was most strongly felt. It must also be remembered that there were also the Peasant Soviets and the Soviets of Soldiers (peasants in uniform) in which in the first months of the revolution a petty-bourgeois ideology prevailed and illusions had not been overcome.

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Tsarist Russia had ceased to be the prison of the people. For a time it had become the freest country in the world. From the Arctic Circle, from the Altai Mountains, the prisoners of Siberia were returning; and from all over the globe, even from remote islands, the exiles were coming back. But, in the case of the exiles abroad, big difficulties were put in their way by the allied Governments of France, Britain, etc. The Governments of France and Britain, well aware of Lenin's fight against the war, would gladly have kept him immured in Switzerland. Lenin and other Bolsheviks travelled back through Germany in a closed train and arrived in Petrograd a month after the beginning of the revolution. He was received at the railway station by a great demonstration and with an official address of welcome from the leaders of the Soviets, for at this time the Mensheviks had the hope of fusing together with the Bolsheviks in one united party. Lenin rudely shattered these illusions. On the day after his return, April 17th, Lenin announced a few short theses, since called "The April Theses," dealing with the tasks of the revolutionary proletariat. It was not long before the whole Bolshevik Party was carrying on a steady propaganda for the views then expressed, which we give in full in the next section.

### 2. THE APRIL THESES

#### I

In our attitude towards the war not the slightest concession must be made to "revolutionary defencism," for even under the new Government of Lvov and Co. the

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war on Russia's part unquestionably remains a predatory imperialist war owing to the capitalist nature of that Government .

The class-conscious proletariat can consent to a revolutionary war, which would really justify revolutionary defencism, only on condition (a) that the power of government pass to the proletariat, and the poor sections of the peasantry bordering on the proletariat, (b) that all annexations be renounced in deed as well as in words, (c) that a complete and real break be made with all capitalist interests

In view of the undoubted honesty of the mass of the rank-and-file believers in revolutionary defencism, who accept the war as a necessity only and not as a means of conquest, in view of the fact that they are being deceived by the bourgeoisie, it is necessary thoroughly, persistently, and patiently to explain their error to them, to explain the indissoluble connection between capital and the imperialist war, and to prove that IT IS IMPOSSIBLE to end the war by a truly democratic, non-coercive peace without the overthrow of capital

The widespread propaganda of this view among the army on active service must be organised

Fraternisation

## II

The specific feature of the present situation in Russia is that it represents a TRANSITION from the first stage of the revolution—which, owing to the insufficient class consciousness and organisation of the proletariat, led to the assumption of power by the bourgeoisie—TO THE SECOND STAGE, which must place power in the hands of

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the proletariat and the poor strata of the peasantry

This transition is characterised, on the one hand, by a maximum of freedom (Russia is now the freest of all the belligerent countries in the world) on the other, by the absence of violence in relation to the masses, and, finally, by the naive confidence of the masses in the government of capitalists, the worst enemies of peace and Socialism

This specific situation demands on our part an ability to adapt ourselves to the specific requirements of Party work among unprecedentedly large masses of proletarians who have just awakened to political life

### III

No support must be given to the Provisional Government, the utter falsity of all its promises must be exposed, particularly of those relating to the renunciation of annexations. Exposure, and not the unpardonable illusion-breeding "demand" that this Government, a Government of capitalists, should CEASE to be an imperialist Government

### IV

The fact must be recognised that in most of the Soviets of Workers' Deputies our Party is in a minority, and so far in a small minority, as against a BLOC OF ALL the petty-bourgeois opportunist elements, who have yielded to the influence of the bourgeoisie and are the conveyors of its influence to the proletariat, from the Narodni-Socialists and the Socialist-Revolutionaries down to the Organisation Committee (Chkheidze, Tseretelli, etc), Steklov, etc, etc.

It must be explained to the masses that the Soviet of

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Workers' Deputies is the ONLY POSSIBLE form of revolutionary Government, and that therefore our task is, as long as THIS Government submits to the influence of the bourgeoisie, to present a patient, systematic, and persistent EXPLANATION of its errors and tactics, an explanation especially adapted to the practical needs of the masses.

As long as we are in the minority we carry on the work of criticising and exposing errors and at the same time advocate the necessity of transferring the entire power of State to the Soviets of Workers' Deputies, so that the masses may by experience overcome their mistakes

### V

Not a parliamentary republic—to return to a parliamentary republic from the Soviets of Workers' Deputies would be a retrograde step—but a republic of Soviets of Workers', Agricultural Labourers', and Peasants' Deputies throughout the country, from top to bottom

Abolition of the police, the army,<sup>1</sup> and the bureaucracy

The salaries of all officials, who are to be elected and be subject to recall at any time, not to exceed the average wage of a competent worker

### VI

The agrarian programme must be centred around the Soviets of Agricultural Labourers' Deputies.

Confiscation of all landed estates

Nationalisation of ALL lands in the country, the disposal of such lands to be in the charge of the local Soviets

<sup>1</sup> i.e. the standing army to be replaced by the universally armed people



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of Agricultural Labourers' and Peasants' Deputies The organisation of separate Soviets of Deputies of the Poor Peasants The creation of model farms on each of the large estates (varying from 100 to 300 dessiatins, in accordance with local and other conditions, at the discretion of the local institutions) under the control of the Agricultural Labourers' Deputies and for the public account.

### VII

The immediate amalgamation of all banks in the country into a single national bank, control over which shall be exercised by the Soviet of Workers' Deputies.

### VIII

Our IMMEDIATE task shall be, not the "introduction of Socialism," but to bring social production and distribution of products at once only under the CONTROL of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies

### IX

Party tasks ·

- (a) Immediate summoning of a Party congress
- (b) Alteration of the Party programme, mainly.
  - 1 On the question of imperialism and the imperialist war.
  2. On the question of our attitude towards the State and our demand for a "Commune State."<sup>1</sup>
  3. Amendment of our antiquated minimum programme.

<sup>1</sup> i.e. a State after the model of the Paris Commune

(c) A new name for the Party <sup>1</sup>

X

A new International

We must take the initiative in creating a revolutionary International, an International directed against the SOCIAL-CHAUVINISTS and against the "Centre" <sup>2</sup>

From this moment onwards, the opposite poles stood out clearly. The lines of force were drawn, and events moved steadily towards the final defeat of one or another standpoint. But the position was not immediately clear to everyone, and, in point of fact, there were differences of attitude in the different political groupings, which only gradually sorted themselves out. The chief groupings that showed themselves within a month after the revolution were.

(1) To the right of the Constitutional Democrats, parties and groups representing the feudal landlords and the most reactionary sections of the capitalists,

(2) The Constitutional Democratic Party (Cadets) and kindred groups who represented the bourgeoisie as a whole, both the capitalist class and landlords become capitalists,

<sup>1</sup> Instead of "Social-Democrats," whose official leaders throughout the world have betrayed Socialism by deserting to the bourgeoisie (the "defencists" and the vacillating "Kautskians"), we must call ourselves a COMMUNIST PARTY.

<sup>2</sup> The "Centre" in the international Social-Democratic movement is the tendency which vacillates between the chauvinists ("defencists") and internationalists, i.e. Kautsky and Co in Germany, Longuet and Co in France, Chkheidze and Co in Russia, Turati and Co in Italy, MacDonald and Co in England, etc.

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(3) Social-Democrats, Social-Revolutionaries, and kindred groups, representing small proprietors, small and middle peasants, the petty-bourgeoisie, and sections of the workers under the influence of the bourgeoisie,

(4) The Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, commonly known as the Bolsheviks, representing the class-conscious proletarians and the allied poor section of the peasantry

The differences between the first two groups were small. For instance, the feudal landlords wished for a constitutional monarchy, with absolute power of the bureaucracy and the police, and were secretly favourable to the restoration of the Romanoff dynasty, while the Cadets were for a bourgeois parliamentary republic while retaining the bureaucracy and the police, and, in fear of the people, had pronounced themselves anti-monarchist. The landlords were against the summoning of a Constituent Assembly, while the Cadets pronounced themselves in favour of a Constituent Assembly but refused to fix a date for it.

The Social-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks, who at that stage still were followed by the vast majority of the population, inevitably stood for a policy of "wait and see."

## 3 MAY TO AUGUST--

Events moved. The first change took place at the beginning of May. The Soviets, within the first few days of their existence, had issued a call for peace without

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annexations and without indemnities. The Cadet Milyukoff, Minister for Foreign Affairs in the Provisional Government, issued at the beginning of May a statement in response to the alarmed representations of the capitalist Governments of Britain, France, etc., in which he made it clear that the Provisional Government would continue to wage war with the same war aims as the Tsardom. These war aims had been set forth in the secret treaties concluded between the Allies, in which the German colonies were to be annexed by Britain, Constantinople was to be handed over to the Tsar, etc., etc. When the soldiers learned from this official statement by Milyukoff that they were to shed their blood for the war aims of Tsardom, there were immediate demonstrations in the streets of Petrograd. So strong was the popular feeling that both Gutchkoff, the War Minister, and Milyukoff, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, were compelled to resign. The Government in mid-May was changed into a Coalition Government, with ten capitalist Ministers and six Ministers drawn from the Socialist-Revolutionary and Menshevik majority parties of the Soviets. This Coalition Cabinet not only continued the same foreign policy as its predecessor, but made preparations for a renewed war offensive, for during this time there had been a sort of standstill on the western front. In addition, they began to prepare measures against the Bolsheviks.

This, however, was not to prove so easy, for each demonstration called by the Soviets showed that the Bolsheviks were becoming more popular amongst the masses with every day that passed. Louder and louder sounded their slogans. "Down with the ten capitalist

Ministers ! All power to the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers', and Peasants' Deputies ! . . . Bread ! Peace ! Freedom ! ”

In response to the pressure of the Entente, Alexander Kerensky, an outside Right Wing Social Revolutionary who had been Minister of Justice in the first Cabinet and was now Minister of War, succeeded by his frenzied orations in stimulating the army to fresh military effort, and on July 1st, under General Brusilov, the Russian armies on the south-western front made a big drive forward into Galicia and captured thousands of Austrian prisoners. The effect on the allied Governments, who judged events in Russia from the standpoint of winning the war, was reassuring. Inside Russia, where everything was judged by the masses from the standpoint of winning the peace, the effect was far otherwise. Signs of renewed revolt began to show themselves. In mid-July, matters came to a head. The counter-revolution had laid its plans. The following was the sequence of events.

On July 15th the ten capitalist Ministers resigned from the Coalition Government. The object was to manœuvre the Ministers drawn from the majority parties in the Soviets into a difficult position where they were to be forced to come to terms as junior partners of the Cadets. The effect on the masses in Petrograd of this resignation of the ten capitalist Ministers was a series of huge armed demonstrations demanding that the Provisional Government should now depend solely upon the Soviets. With the help of Tsarist officers, the Social-Revolutionary and Menshevik Ministers repressed the demonstrations, fired on the demonstrators, and, while

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the capital was at fever-heat, arranged for the publication of forged documents purporting to show that Lenin was a German spy and that the Bolshevik agitation was a plot of the German general staff against the Provisional Government. The forgery was vouched for by Alexinsky, a former close associate of Lenin at the beginning of the century. On the next day, Tsarist officers raided and wrecked the printing works of *Pravda* and searched for Lenin, whose arrest, together with that of other leading Bolsheviks, had been ordered by the Government. At the same time the death penalty, which had been abolished in the first days of the February Revolution, was restored. Kamenev, with his legalist notions (he had, disgracefully for a Bolshevik, signed a telegram of greetings to the Grand Duke Michael in the February days), was actually for Lenin giving himself over to the police. Stalin opposed and carried the majority against this. The Central Committee of the Party decided that Lenin must go into hiding, from which he was not allowed to emerge, so great was the danger of his assassination, for over three months. In general, an endeavour was made to terrorise the vanguard of the working class and to drive the Bolsheviks underground.

The next step was pressure from the Cadets and the capitalists generally upon the Provisional Government. Under this pressure the Coalition was reformed, with Alexander Kerensky as Prime Minister, on the terms put forward by the Cadets—namely, that the Socialist Ministers must be entirely independent of the Soviets.

A further step was the summoning of a "State Conference" called jointly by the Provisional Government and the Executive Committee of the Congress of Soviets.

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and held outside the capital in Moscow. The Bolshevik members of the Soviets were not allowed to participate. But the army generals and the direct representatives of the bourgeoisie were invited. It was an attempt to form a parliament and centre of counter-revolution. The commander-in-chief, Kornilov, who was working at this moment for his own personal dictatorship as the representative of the bankers and capitalist magnates, made a declaration in favour of a severe regime to carry through the "salvation" of the country. General Kaledin, commander of the Don Cossacks, followed up with a speech in which he advocated that the Soviets should be abolished and that the army should refrain from politics. It was the public preparation of a counter-revolutionary *coup d'état* which would have been carried out at the time of the "State Conference" (August 25th-28th) but for a one-day protest strike of the Moscow workers, nearly half a million of whom came out into the streets. The *coup d'état*, however, was only postponed.

Meantime, the Bolsheviks, at the Sixth Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Party, held in the second week of August under semi-legal conditions, had already sensed and understood the counter-revolutionary moves that were afoot. They drew the necessary conclusion—that armed insurrection must be prepared for. The Congress, in the absence of Lenin, was led by Stalin.

Following on the "State Conference," Kerensky began discussing with Kornilov about measures to be taken to restore "law and order," but Kornilov and his backers, the Tsarist generals, Cadets, banking and in-

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dustrial circles, thought there was no need to make two bites of a cherry. Why trouble to establish a military dictatorship behind the façade of a Kerensky Government which would presently have to be turned down anyhow? Accordingly, Kerensky learned on September 8th that Kornilov, with regiments of picked troops, including the notorious "Savage Division," was marching on Petrograd in order to proclaim himself, and not Kerensky, as dictator. In this awkward situation, and forced by the pressure of the masses, Kerensky was compelled to charge Kornilov with high treason. But it was not Kerensky who took action against Kornilov. It was the Bolsheviks who saved the situation. They mobilised the workers and soldiers of Petrograd. They sent trains, filled with agitators and revolutionary soldiers to meet the advancing troops of Kornilov. By the time Kornilov's troops had got within measurable distance of Petrograd they had become themselves more than half-revolutionary and quite unsuited to carry out a counter-revolution. The Kornilov attempt was defeated.

#### 4 SEPTEMBER TO OCTOBER

The Kornilov affair was an eye-opener. The workers and soldiers realised into what peril the revolution had been put by the compromising policy of the Mensheviks and Social-Revolutionaries. From this moment onwards there was an extremely rapid swing of the masses to the side of the Bolsheviks. Again resounded the slogans: "All Power to the Soviets! . . . Bread! Peace! Freedom!" Before the end of September the majority of the



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trade unions had become Bolshevik. A few weeks later, in the elections of the Moscow Borough Dumas, the Bolsheviks had 52 per cent of the total vote of all classes of the population. There were elected 350 Bolsheviks, 184 Cadets, 104 Social-Revolutionaries, 31 Mensheviks, and several non-Party. It was clear that in Moscow the workers *en masse* and the soldiers *en masse* had gone Bolshevik. Again in the month of September new elections were being held for the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets. In the Soviet elections Petrograd, like Paris in the great French Revolution, led the rest of the country. Accordingly, when the Petrograd Soviet was re-elected with an overwhelming Bolshevik majority, it was clear from this also that the workers had swung to the side of the Bolsheviks.

All this while hunger had been growing. In the towns the conditions of life were steadily worsening for the working class, to whom each week of the Provisional Government (now in September entitled a "Directorate," headed by Kerensky) had brought bitter enlightenment. For, as Lenin wrote in mid-September

"During a revolution, millions and tens of millions of people learn in a week more than they do in a year of their ordinary somnolent life. For during a severe crisis in the life of a people it becomes particularly apparent what aims the various classes of the people are pursuing, what forces they control, and what methods they resort to in action."

A similar process was to be seen amongst the twelve million soldiers whose agonies, instead of being relieved,

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as they had hoped, were being prolonged by the Kerensky Government. A similar process was also at work in the countryside itself. There the vast majority of the population dwelled, and it was because of this preponderant mass of peasantry, together with the intermediate strata in the towns, that Lenin could write "Russia is a petty-bourgeois country." Intermediate between the two main classes of capitalist society, the petty-bourgeoisie wavered continually between bourgeoisie and proletariat. But if once it joined the proletariat, then the victory of revolution was secured, then, swiftly, smoothly, irresistibly, the cause of peace, of land for the toilers, of freedom, would triumph. And now this process was begun. Already the class of poor peasants had learned not to put their trust in the earlier elected leaders of the Soviets. Chernov as leader of the Social-Revolutionaries had given out slogans for the peasants. Chernov as Minister of Agriculture held back the peasants from carrying out his own slogans. The situation became so acute that the peasants began to take action on their own, and punitive expeditions were being sent against them. A break began to appear in the ranks of the Social-Revolutionaries, the party which up to then had commanded the adherence of the peasantry. The Petrograd Conference of the Social-Revolutionary Party on September 23rd, conducted under the leadership of the Left Wing (Spiridonova, Kamkov, and others), demanded the end of coalition and the formation of a Government based upon Soviets. All was becoming ripe for insurrection. By the second week of October, Lenin was able to note in his article on the *aims of the revolution* that "the poverty of the poor

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peasants, the horrors of the war, the horrors of the famine—all these are bringing home more and more clearly to the masses the correctness of the proletarian path, the necessity of supporting the proletarian revolution." Truly, the miserable grinding poverty and land-hunger of the peasantry was becoming unendurable. Thus in September and October the vast landslide began—the movement of the peasant, of the petty-bourgeois mass onto the same path as the town worker.

The significance of this was enormous. It meant that the ground was crumbling away beneath the feet of the Government and its backers. All the more desperately the "dark forces" prepared for a further attempt at a counter-revolution. All the more earnestly Lenin strove—to anticipate any such attempt—for an immediate transfer of power to the Soviets. He was in hiding in Finland. All through September and October the tone of his letters and articles becomes more and more urgent. Fortunately for the historian, the majority of these have been preserved and give to future ages a documentation of the revolution that is incomparable. At this particular moment Lenin was expressing through the voice of a single man the agony and urgent desire of millions of mankind. With Lenin were the majority of the Central Committee, and especially Stalin and Sverdlov. But in the Central Committee of the Bolsheviks there was resistance, there were difficulties. On the one hand Zinoviev and Kamenev, together with several other leading members of the Party, fought obdurately against insurrection. When finally they were defeated, they broke the discipline for which they as Party leaders were particularly responsible and published their

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differences with the Central Committee in the non-Bolshevik Press They even disclosed the decision to carry through an armed rising On November 1st Lenin wrote that

“ two members of the Central Committee have by a slanderous lie *betrayed* the decision of the workers to the capitalists There can and must be only one answer to that an immediate decision of the Central Committee in the following terms ‘Regarding Zinoviev’s and Kamenev’s utterance in the non-Party Press as strike-breaking in the full sense of the term, the Central Committee expels both of them from the Party’ It is not *easy* for me to write thus about former close comrades, but I should regard any hesitation in this respect as a crime, for a party of revolutionaries which did not punish prominent strike-breakers would *perish* ”

The other difficulty came from Trotsky, and was with regard to the timing of the revolution Trotsky, when he returned to Russia after the revolution, belonged to a small group called the Meshrayontsy As the summer approached, Trotsky dropped (or, to be precise, put in cold storage) his fundamental differences with the Bolsheviks—though as late as June 1917 he was attacking what he called their “organisational narrowness” It was not until the eve of the Sixth Congress in August that Trotsky joined the Bolsheviks In mid-September he was elected Chairman of the Petrograd Soviet, where it was his business to carry out the decisions of the Party But on the question of the timing of the revolution he

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insisted on its coincidence with the Second Congress of Soviets, which had been postponed till November. With the utmost urgency Lenin fought against this linking of the dates. On the very eve of the insurrection Lenin was compelled to write a letter to the Central Committee in the same tone of urgency, saying

“ It is absolutely clear that to delay the insurrection now will veritably be fatal. I exhort my comrades with all my heart and strength to realise that everything now hangs on a thread, that we are being confronted by problems that can be solved, not by conferences or congresses (even Congresses of Soviets), but exclusively by the people, by the masses, by the struggle of the armed masses. History will not forgive revolutionaries for procrastinating when they can be victorious to-day (will certainly be victorious to-day) while they risk losing much—in fact, everything—to-morrow ”

It was on October 23rd that the Central Committee of the Bolsheviks had decided on insurrection, and had the decision confirmed at an enlarged Central Committee on October 29th. At the same time, to carry through the insurrection, the Central Committee appointed a Military Revolutionary Committee, consisting of Stalin, Sverdlov, Dzershinzky, Bubnov, and Uritsky. To these comrades was confided supreme operative direction of the rising.

The Second Congress of Soviets was due to open in Petrograd on November 7th, before midnight, and very early in the morning of November 7th, detachments of

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soldiers of the Petrograd District garrison and Red Guards from the Petrograd factories had occupied all military and strategic positions. By mid-day, Kerensky had fled and the other Ministers had been arrested. With comparatively little fighting, with hardly any bloodshed, the insurrection had been carried through in the capital.

At 10 a.m. on November 7th, Lenin issued the following statement, in the name of the Revolutionary Military Committee, of which he had now taken over the leadership.

*“ To the Citizens of Russia, in the name of the Revolutionary Military Committee .*

“ The Provisional Government has been overthrown. The power of State has passed into the hands of the organ of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies—the Revolutionary Military Committee, which is leading the Petrograd proletariat and garrison.

“ The cause for which the people have fought, namely, the immediate proposal of a democratic peace, the abolition of landed proprietorship, workers' control over production, and the creation of a Soviet Government—the success of that cause is guaranteed.

“ Long live the revolution of the soldiers, workers, and peasants ! ”

Late in the evening the Second Congress of Soviets opened. There were 670 delegates, of whom 300 were Bolsheviks and 169 Left Social-Revolutionaries, while the Mensheviks numbered 68 and the Right and Centre Social-Revolutionaries only 24. The Congress by an

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overwhelming majority endorsed the Revolution and took over supreme power. At this second session on November 8th the Congress elected a new All-Russian Central Executive Committee and formed a Soviet Government

The Central Executive Committee consisted of 69 Bolsheviks, 29 Left Social-Revolutionaries, and some half-dozen others, making 105 in all. The Soviet Government took the form of a Council of People's Commissars, in which Lenin was chairman. The great Decree on Peace and the Decree on the Land were passed, and the Congress of Soviets concluded. The following is the Manifesto of the Congress

**“ TO THE WORKERS, SOLDIERS, AND PEASANTS.**

“ The Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies has begun. A vast majority of the Soviets are represented at the Congress. There are also present a number of delegates from the Peasants' Soviets. The mandate of the compromising Central Executive Committee has terminated. Backed by the will of the vast majority of workers, soldiers, and peasants, backed by the successful uprising of the workers and of the garrison in Petrograd, the Congress takes the power of government into its hands

“ The Provisional Government has been overthrown. The majority of the members of the Provisional Government are already arrested

“ The Soviet Government will propose an immediate democratic peace to all peoples and an immediate armistice on all fronts. It will secure the transfer

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of the estates of the landlords, appanages, and monasterial lands to the control of the peasants' committees without compensation, it will protect the rights of the soldiers by introducing complete democracy in the army, it will establish workers' control over production, it will see to it that the Constituent Assembly is convened at its appointed time, it will see to it that bread is supplied to the cities and articles of prime necessity to the villages, it will guarantee all the nations inhabiting Russia the genuine right of self-determination

"The Congress decrees all power in the localities shall pass to the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers', and Peasants' Deputies, which must guarantee genuine revolutionary order

"The Congress calls upon the soldiers in the trenches to be watchful and firm. The Congress of Soviets is convinced that the revolutionary army will succeed in defending the revolution from all attacks of imperialism until such time as the new Government succeeds in concluding a democratic peace, which it will propose directly to all the peoples. The new Government will take measures to supply all the needs of the revolutionary army by resorting to a determined policy of requisitioning and taxation of the propertied classes, and also to improve the condition of the soldiers' families.

"The Kornilovists—Kerensky, Kaledin, and others—are attempting to bring troops against Petrograd. A few detachments who, duped by Kerensky, had moved on Petrograd, have come over to the side of the people in revolt



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“SOLDIERS, ACTIVELY RESIST THE KORNILOVIST  
KERENSKY ! BE ON YOUR GUARD !”

“RAILWAYMEN, HOLD UP THE TROOP TRAINS DES-  
PATCHED BY KERENSKY AGAINST PETROGRAD !”

“SOLDIERS, WORKERS, AND EMPLOYEES, THE FATE  
OF THE REVOLUTION AND THE FATE OF THE DEMO-  
CRATIC PEACE IS IN YOUR HANDS !”

“LONG LIVE THE REVOLUTION !”

“The All-Russian Congress of Soviets  
of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies

“The Delegates from the Peasants’ Soviets

“November 8th (October 26th), 1917”

These two days, November 7th and 8th, of the October Revolution, so called because under the old-styled calendar they fell on October 25th and 26th, marked the end of the second stage of the revolution, whose first stage had begun more than twelve years before. The second stage had lasted eight months. And now the dual control had passed away. Russia had become the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic.

## CHAPTER II

# LAND, BREAD, AND PEACE

### I PEACE

THE SLOGANS OF THE REVOLUTION had been "Land, Bread, and Peace." The peace slogan had been embodied in the Decree on Peace, passed on November 8th. The first Decree of the Soviets was to make their exit from the imperialist war. Immediately after the assumption of power, the Soviet Government issued by wireless their proposals for an armistice on all fronts as a preliminary for a general peace. The Allied Governments, which had refused to recognise the new regime, could give no official or responsible answer. The French and British embassies, however, sent a message to General Dukhonnin, Kerensky's commander-in-chief, who had refused to accept his supersession by the Soviet commander-in-chief Krylenko, informing him that the Allies most strongly objected to any cessation of hostilities, and urging upon him the further prosecution of the war<sup>1</sup>.

The German Government responded, and, after a

<sup>1</sup> Incidentally, it was on this occasion that Lenin and Stalin went to the microphone, where the former directly addressed the soldiers on all the fronts, informing them of the sabotage by the army officers of the instructions given by the Soviet Government, and called upon the masses of soldiers themselves to see to it that the orders of the Soviet Government were carried out. The whole incident was one of the most remarkable examples of the faith in the masses always exhibited by Lenin and Stalin.

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cessation of hostilities, an armistice was negotiated. The conclusion of the terms of the armistice, which included the fixing of the armies in their respective positions and an interdiction on any transfer of the troops of the Central Empires to the western front, was delayed until a further appeal could be made to the Allies to join in a general armistice, preliminary to a general peace. To this appeal of the Bolsheviks, which could have saved a million lives, no reply of any kind was given. Accordingly, every effort for a general peace having been tried in vain, negotiations began on December 20th, 1917, for a separate peace between Germany and its allies on the one hand, and the Soviets on the other.

The Soviet representatives cabled certain general principles of the proposed peace, which they declared must be a peace without annexations and without indemnities, this was to mean that the position of the High Contracting Parties before the war was to be resumed, except that subject nationalities were to exercise the right of self-determination, and that the individual sufferers from the war were to receive reparations from a common fund, to be contributed to by all the belligerents. Furthermore, all negotiations were to be open and their daily progress was to be published by wireless. On December 25th, 1917, at Brest-Litovsk, these general principles for conclusion of peace were accepted by the Hohenzollern Government of Germany, the Hapsburg Government of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, by Ferdinand of Bulgaria and the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire. How far this was a concession to working-class feeling in Central Europe, or how far it was regarded as part of the normal diplomatic bluff and

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hypocrisy, it is hard to say. Within a few days, however, it became clear that Count Czernin, the Austrian, and Von Kuhlmann, the German, had no intention of regarding these general proposals seriously, and that they intended to grab "the spoils of victory"

To their surprise, to the astonishment of the rest of the world, the Bolsheviks as stoutly maintained these basic principles, and at once rounded on their enemies, accusing them of, personal deceitfulness inspired by a policy of naked imperialism

The relations between the two sets of negotiators passed rapidly from an attitude of ironical conciliation to one of undisguised aversion. Meantime, a continuous propaganda was carried on by both sides among the troops. But the propaganda of the Bolsheviks was enormously superior in its appeal; it reached the civil population behind the lines, and it was not Von Kuhlmann or Kaiser Wilhelm to whom the Bolsheviks addressed their speeches, but the labouring masses of the German Empire and the Austrian Empire. For a time the capitalist diplomats were completely in the dark. They did not realise what was happening. They even seemed to think that the Bolsheviks, being Socialists, were merely intolerable spouters, beings so wrapped up in their own opinions, so lost to a sense of reality, that they could not refrain from agitational speeches in the Council and Chamber. At one time they even thought these speeches were made for home consumption in Russia for the purpose of smoothing the path to the acceptance of the German terms. Suddenly their diplomatic illusions were shattered. The working people of Austria and Germany, penetrated by the proletarian

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appeal of the Bolsheviki, began to move. A series of enormous strikes broke out in Vienna, in Berlin, and in Hamburg, and all over the country. For three years the workers of Germany and her allies had suffered privation and hardships; but so long as they could be persuaded that their rulers were intent only on defending the fatherland, so long they appeared willing to submit to the unending war.

Brest-Litovsk opened their eyes With a sudden awakening, the working class of the big cities of Germany and Austria downed tools and the sailors of the German Baltic Fleet broke out in open mutiny It was not a mere series of economic strikes, but a revolutionary political movement From the Petrograd Soviet, a wireless message was sent to the Councils of Workers' Delegates, that had been set up in that month of January 1918 in Berlin and Vienna, as follows

“Brothers ! The news has filtered through to us of your glorious fight against German and universal imperialism The workers and soldiers of Petrograd have welcomed the news with transports of indescribable enthusiasm. Brothers and companions-in-arms, by your strikes and demonstrations, and the creation of your Council of Workers' and Soldiers' Delegates, you have shown that the Austro-German working class will not allow the hangmen and spoilers to impose a peace of violations and annexations on the Socialist Republic of the Soviets

“Civil war in Russia is nearing its end in the complete victory of the social revolution. The destined outcome of the peace *pourparlers* is being decided, not

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at Brest-Litovsk, but in the streets of Berlin and Vienna and other German and Austrian cities. Brothers, we cordially believe that you will do all that is possible to ensure that the peace *pourparlers* shall end in *pourparlers* between the Russian Workmen's and Peasants' Government and the German Government of Liebknecht."

It is, of course, a matter of historical record that Field Marshal Von Hindenburg publicly testified some years later that the revolutionary expectations of the Petrograd Soviet had been falsified by the betrayal of the German anti-war strike movement through the actions of Fritz Ebert and other leading German Social-Democrats.

Thus the Bolsheviks, while carrying on these negotiations, were using the opportunity to foment a revolution in Germany, and by this means to assure the ending of war on all fronts and for mankind as a whole. But Von Kuhlmann and Count Czernin were also making use of their opportunities. They were endeavouring to foment a counter-revolutionary defection of the Ukrainian Rada from the Soviet side. The Rada was the parliament of the Ukrainian National Republic, which had been immediately recognised by the Bolsheviks as autonomous, following on their principle of the right of self-determination for nationalities. This Rada, unlike the Soviets, contained representatives of all classes. For this reason, the recognition denied to the Soviet Government had been immediately accorded to the Rada by the Allies, who supplemented recognition with financial support.

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The German and Austrian militarists, however, discerned in its composite character a chance to break the solidarity of the opposed front. Just as the Bolsheviks had hoped for the breaking of the Central Empires by a working-class revolution, so their opponents counted on the opposition of the Rada to a Soviet regime proving stronger than the claims of patriotism or the hatred of the foreign enemy. So from the beginning of the negotiations they began to work secretly upon the Rada. On January 11th they had got so far that the Rada plenipotentiaries announced at Brest-Litovsk that the Ukraine had now taken up its international existence as an independent State. By the end of the first week in February, the German and Austrian efforts were finally successful. The Rada accepted the German-Austrian terms and signed a separate peace on February 9th, 1918. The president of the Rada delegation described it as "a democratic peace that is honourable for both sides." Actually, it amounted to a German suzerainty over the Ukraine.

Then General Hoffmann, thrusting aside the civilian negotiators, announced bluntly that the Hohenzollern and Hapsburg Governments meant to have the spoils of victory, and delivered an ultimatum demanding that the Bolsheviks should sign the treaty, which was one of spoliation, within a few days.

Already, on January 7th, Lenin, who saw that at all costs the revolution must "get a breathing-space," had presented a thesis to the Central Committee of the Party in which he urged the immediate conclusion of peace with Germany even on the severe terms offered. These terms meant that the Germans would occupy the whole

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of Poland and Lithuania, Courland and part of Livonia, White Russia and the islands in the Gulf of Riga, besides receiving an indemnity, disguised as the upkeep (that is, the board and lodging) of the Russian prisoners of war.

Trotsky and Bucharin, however, opposed the immediate conclusion of peace. Against Lenin, who wanted an end to the slaughter and a breathing-space for the revolution, they refused to see the realities of the situation. Trotsky and Bucharin had passed from real life to theatre. Finally, when the German imperialists refused to modify their terms, Trotsky proposed the adventurist formula of Neither War nor Peace, and, in spite of Lenin, who described this formula as the scrapping of the revolution, the Central Committee agreed. Lenin said to the Central Committee on January 24th:

“What Trotsky proposed—discontinuance of the war, refusal to sign peace, and the demobilisation of the army—means an international political demonstration. All we will achieve by withdrawing our troops is to surrender the Esthonian Socialist Republic to the Germans. By signing peace . . . we will enable our gains to gather strength. If the Germans begin to advance, we will be forced to sign any kind of peace, and then the peace will, of course, be worse.”

On February 17th, 1918, the Germans declared the armistice at an end and, without waiting for the expiry of the seven days' notice, resumed the war. The armies of the Kaiser advanced steadily into Russian territory. They met with practically no resistance. Immense



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military supplies fell into their hands. They occupied the whole of Latvia and Esthonia, almost the whole of White Russia, and a good part of the Ukraine.

Convinced too late of how they had been misled by Trotsky, the Central Committee, through the Soviet Government, wired their readiness to sign the peace terms. But this no longer suited the Germans' book, and they proposed new peace terms of incredibly greater severity. Not only did they insist on holding the new territory that they had occupied, but demanded that the Soviet troops immediately evacuate the whole of Finland, the whole of the Ukraine, and part of Trans-Caucasia. Certain sections of the Bolsheviks would not sign the new peace terms. Lenin had to struggle almost as never before, and had to take the extreme step of threatening to resign from the Central Committee and the Government if there was any further hesitation in face of this mortal danger to the revolution. The Central Committee accepted. The Central Executive Committee of the Soviets, with a majority of Bolsheviks on it, accepted. On March 2nd, the peace of Brest-Litovsk was signed, and a fortnight later, on March 17th, was ratified by the Third All-Russia Congress of Soviets.

Trotsky, at the Central Committee, had refused to vote either way. Bucharin and Pyatakov continued the struggle begun by Trotsky against the line of Lenin, and mobilised the Moscow Committee of the Party, a number of members of the Central Committee, and a number of People's Commissars against the decisions of the Central Committee and the Soviet Government. They formed a "Left" Communist fraction; they attacked the leadership of the Party in most outrageous terms, Bucharin

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calling Lenin a phrase-monger of opportunism. They entered into negotiations with the Left Social-Revolutionaries. For several months they continued a factional struggle on every main policy of the Bolsheviki. In the course of this, they descended into conspiracies, and were preparing to arrest and imprison Lenin, whose place as Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars was to be taken by Pyatakov.

Thus in the first months of the year, and especially in March, April, and May, the enormous difficulties which confronted the leadership of the Bolshevik Party, headed by Lenin, Stalin, and Sverdlov, were further complicated by the fierce factional struggle and conspiracies carried on by the "Left" Communists whose adventurist tactics had been inspired by Trotsky.

### 2. LAND

On November 7th and 8th the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, on the proposal of Lenin, accepted as their decision, not the Bolshevik land programme, but the land programme of the Social-Revolutionaries, compiled some five months earlier at the First All-Russia Congress of Peasants' Deputies. This programme of the Social-Revolutionaries had not been carried out by its authors, the Social-Revolutionary Party, who protested that the Bolsheviki had stolen their thunder. This programme was one of dividing up the land, and it was not until a couple of years later that the Bolshevik programme of land nationalisation was carried through, after the peasants had themselves, through their own experience,

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realised the correctness of the Bolshevik proposals. For the moment, the peasantry were satisfied that the Soviet Government represented their interests.

During November and December, negotiations went on with the Left Social-Revolutionaries, who had entered the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets but were hesitating to enter the Council of People's Commissars. Before the end of the year several of them took up the posts of People's Commissars in the Government. Thus the slogan of the revolution, the Dictatorship of the Proletariat in alliance with the poorer peasantry, was reflected in the joint representation in the Government of the Bolsheviks and the Left Social-Revolutionaries. But this coalition was not to last long.

The petty-bourgeois revolutionariness of the Left Social-Revolutionaries was not able to stand the strain of Brest-Litovsk. After the signature of the treaty, when the "Left" Communists resigned from their posts, the Left Social-Revolutionaries also resigned from the Council of People's Commissars. From this moment onwards the Left Social-Revolutionaries endeavoured to break the peace, which represented the necessary breathing-space of the revolution, by reckless attempts to precipitate a renewal of the war with German imperialism. These culminated finally in an attempt to seize power at the end of the first week of July 1918, on the occasion of the Fifth All-Russia Congress of Soviets. Two Social-Revolutionaries assassinated Count Mirbach, the ambassador of the Hohenzollerns, with the object of causing the renewal of war, and, at the same time, seized various strategic positions in Moscow. For the capital had now been moved to Moscow from Petrograd,

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which was too near to hostile forces. Within forty-eight hours this insurrection had been liquidated. The basis of it had not only been the continuance of the Social-Revolutionary adventurist policy as regards war and peace, but the resistance of the kulaks to the grain requisitions made by the Soviet Government and to the building up of the organisations of poor peasants in the village by the Bolsheviks. For within those eight months a basic change had taken place. The Right Social-Revolutionaries had passed completely over into the camp of open counter-revolution, the Left Social-Revolutionaries, who had previously represented the mass of the peasantry, had now come to represent the kulaks, while the masses of poor peasants now felt their interests were best represented by the Bolsheviks, who also had the support, or at least the acquiescence, of the bulk of the middle peasantry.

From this moment onwards the political form of government in Russia is the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, led by the single party of the Bolsheviks.

### 3 DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT

Sixty-five years before the October Revolution, Karl Marx, in a letter to his friend, Joseph Weydemeyer, had disclaimed any credit for the discovery of the class struggle, and then added the historic words:

“What I did that was new was to prove:

- (1) That the EXISTENCE OF CLASSES is only bound up with a PARTICULAR, HISTORIC PHASE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF PRODUCTION,

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- (2) That the class struggle necessarily leads to the  
DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT;
- (3) That this dictatorship itself only constitutes the  
transition to the ABOLITION OF ALL CLASSES and to  
a CLASSLESS SOCIETY ”

The life-work of Lenin up to this point had been to realise the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. For twenty years and more on this subject there has been widespread misrepresentation and not a little downright lying. It has been equated with despotism, autocracy, tyranny, etc., etc. The insistence of Lenin that proletarian dictatorship is a democracy, and that bourgeois democracy is a dictatorship, has been scorned as a paradox, without any attempt to ascertain its meaning. The experiences in this respect of past revolutions (e.g. the Commonwealth period in seventeenth-century Britain) have been ignored. Yet, to use the words of Lenin:

“ It was this historical experience of all revolutions, it was this world-historical—economic and political—lesson that Marx confirmed in giving his short, sharp, concise, and striking formula Dictatorship of the Proletariat.”<sup>1</sup>

For the moment it should be noted that the achievement of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat did not mean immediate Socialism. What had been proposed in the April Theses of Lenin was not immediate Socialism but

<sup>1</sup> *Selected Works*, Vol VII, p 338 For a full treatment of this subject see also “Theses on Bourgeois Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat” (1919) and other writings in this same volume

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supervision and control of industry by Workers' Committees. Consequently, November 7th-8th had meant a complete change in State power by the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, but only tentative though significant changes in the economic basis. The big banks were fused together and nationalised, a monopoly of foreign trade (which, to be sure, hardly existed at that moment) was established. The first steps were taken for the socialisation of joint stock companies.

The efforts of the new Government were met with sabotage on the part, not only of the capitalists, but of intellectuals, technicians, civil servants, and the middle classes generally. Amongst the Don Cossacks, General Kaledin at once raised a revolt. Similar revolts were started by Generals Krassnov, Dutov, and other Tsarist officers whom the Russian workers, in an access of mistaken clemency, had set free on parole within a few days after the victory of the revolution. By the time the spring was reached, all the accumulated difficulties caused by the war, and by the disorganisation following on the revolution of February, had combined together to make the tasks of the Bolsheviks more difficult. It was at this point, in March-April 1918, immediately "the breathing-space" had been given, that Lenin elaborated the plan of Socialist construction which is known as Lenin's Economic Plan of Spring 1918, under the title of "The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government." It began by the statement that, thanks to the peace which had been achieved—notwithstanding its burdensome character and its instability—the Russian Soviet Republic was enabled, for a certain time, to concentrate its efforts on the most important and most difficult aspect of the

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Socialist revolution, viz the organisational task Two quotations from the body of this extraordinarily important programmatic article may serve graphically to show what lay before the revolution as its task, and what was the main obstacle at that moment.

“Introduce,” said Lenin, “accurate and conscientious accounting of money, manage economically, do not be lazy, do not steal, observe the strictest discipline during work—it is precisely such slogans, which were justly scorned by the revolutionary proletariat when the bourgeoisie concealed its rule as an exploiting class by these commandments, that now, after the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, are becoming the immediate and the principal slogans of the moment”

It is impossible even to summarise the extraordinarily powerful and rich argumentation, with its deep insight into social-economic processes, that appears in this programme. It met with the fiercest opposition from the “Left” Communists, and the reply to them forms the concluding portion of this statement. We quote in full this

### *“Conclusion*

“An extraordinarily difficult and dangerous situation in international affairs, the necessity of manoeuvring and retreating; a period of waiting for new outbreaks of the revolution which is maturing in the West at a painfully slow pace; within the country a period of slow construction and ruthless ‘tightening up,’ of

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prolonged and persistent struggle waged by stern, proletarian discipline against the menacing element of petty-bourgeois laxity and anarchy—such, in brief, are the distinguishing features of the special stage of the Socialist revolution we are now living in. Such is the link in the historical chain of events which we must grasp with all our might in order to be able to cope with the tasks that confront us before passing to the next link which is attracting us by its particular brightness, the brightness of the victory of the international proletarian revolution. Try to compare the slogans that arise from the specific conditions of the present stage, viz manoeuvre, retreat, wait, build slowly, ruthlessly tighten up, sternly discipline, smash laxity—with the ordinary everyday concept ‘revolutionary’. Is it surprising that when certain ‘revolutionaries’ hear this they are filled with noble indignation and begin to ‘thunder’ abuse at us for forgetting the traditions of the October Revolution, for compromising with the bourgeois specialists, for compromising with the bourgeoisie, for being petty bourgeois, reformists, etc., etc.?

“The misfortune of these sorry ‘revolutionaries’ is that even those who are prompted by the best motives in the world, and are absolutely loyal to the cause of Socialism, fail to understand the particular, and ‘particularly unpleasant,’ state that a backward country, which has been tortured by a reactionary and disastrous war and which began the Socialist revolution long before the more advanced countries, has to pass through, they lack stamina in the difficult moments of a difficult transition. Naturally, it is the



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'Left Socialist-Revolutionaries' who are acting as an 'official' opposition of *this* kind against our Party. Of course, there are, and always will be, individual exceptions in groups and class types. But social types remain. In the land in which the small-proprietor population greatly predominates over the purely proletarian population, the difference between the proletarian revolutionary and petty-bourgeois revolutionary will inevitably make itself felt, and from time to time will make itself very sharply felt. The petty-bourgeois revolutionary wavers and vacillates at every turn of events; he is an ardent revolutionary in March 1917, and praises 'coalitions' in May, hates the Bolsheviks (or laments over their 'adventurism') in July, and runs away from them in fear at the end of October, supports them in December, and finally, in March and April 1918, such types, more often than not, turn up their noses contemptuously and say: 'I am not one of those who sing hymns to "organic" work, to practicalness and gradualness.'

"The social source of these types is the small master who is driven to frenzy by the horrors of war, the sudden ruin, the unprecedented tortures of starvation and destruction, who hysterically rushes from place to place seeking salvation, places his confidence in the proletariat and supports it at one moment and falls into fits of despair at another. We must clearly understand and fully appreciate the fact that Socialism cannot be built on such a social basis. The only class that can lead the toilers and the exploited masses is the class that unswervingly marches along its path without losing courage and without dropping into

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despair even at the most difficult, severe, and dangerous crossings. Fits of hysteria are of no use to us. What we need is the steady march of the iron battalions of the proletariat."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lenin's *Selected Works*, Vol VII, pp. 348-50.

## CHAPTER III

# INTERVENTION AND CIVIL WAR

### I. THE CAPITALIST POWERS ATTACK

THE FULFILMENT in all its amplitude of the Socialist task set by Lenin was confronted by an attempt to cut short the life of the Soviet Republic by intervention and civil war. Civil war, indeed, had already begun amongst the Don Cossacks, but from the beginning, in early summer 1918, of the civil war, right up to its final end in 1922, the rebels against the Soviet Government, the Whites of various shades, all depended upon the support and active assistance of foreign Powers.

There have been other occasions in history when a revolutionary Government has been assailed by the armed forces of foreign reactionary States. The French Revolution had to combat the armies simultaneously of seven European Powers, but the Russian Revolution had to fight simultaneously against the armed forces of no less than fourteen capitalist Powers. Throughout the last half of 1918 there is war and civil war; there is marching and fighting in all the Russias. From the Polish border to the Pacific, from the High Pamirs to the Arctic Ocean, there are hostilities of Germans, Austrians, Czecho-Slovakians, Turks, Kurds, Armenians, British, Japanese, Americans, Chinese, French, Italians, Greeks, Portuguese, etc. The territories of the Tsardom appear

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to be disintegrating, and within each sector, near the borders, there appears a foreign invader or an adherent of the old regime.

For the first six months and more of the intervention and civil war, both the Germans and their allies on the one hand, and the French, British, and Americans on the other hand, though locked in deadly combat, were actually co-operating in an endeavour to weaken or crush Bolshevism. The German imperialists and their associates regarded the Soviet Government as a Power to be weakened to the utmost extent. In all the western provinces which they had seized, the Baltic barons (as the Germanised upper classes and large proprietors were termed) were given full power and all Socialist activities were suppressed. In Esthonia and Latvia the Germans enabled the counter-revolution to triumph. The same was the case in Finland, where the capitalist parties, defeated in the elections, had dropped all pretence of constitutionalism and appealed to the arbitrament of civil war. The Finnish Whites appealed to the Hohenzollern Government for help. The independence of Finland was recognised by the Germans at the same time as negotiations were carried on for the establishment of a Finnish monarchy, with a German princeling as king; and German soldiers were poured into Helsingfors. Within a few months the majority of the more active Reds had been exterminated or cast into prison, and General Mannerheim was in the saddle as regent, supported by German bayonets. The huge populous Republic of the Ukraine the Germans frankly regarded as a protectorate whose harvest and production must supply the German military machine. They abolished

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the Rada and put the Government of the Ukraine in the hands of the Hetman Skoropadsky, under the surveillance of Field Marshal Von Eichhorn, and then pushed on beyond the Dnieper and the Don to the northern shores of the Black Sea. Here they began to occupy territory within the bounds of Soviet Russia, returning no satisfactory answer to the repeated remonstrances of the Soviet Government, who were compelled themselves to sink the Black Sea Fleet to prevent it from falling into the hands of the Germans. Their ally, the Sultan of Turkey, pushed up northward into the Caucasus, attacking the Soviet forces and turning an equally deaf ear to the Moscow wireless. To German imperialism and its allies, the problem of the former Russian Empire was capable of a threefold solution—political, economic, and military. Firstly, it was important for them to keep the Soviet Government as weak as possible (co-operation with it having proved out of the question), to utilise for this purpose the hatred of the Bolsheviks amongst the bourgeoisie of the outlying territories, and by this means to build up a German hegemony on the Baltic and on the Black Sea. Secondly, it was their purpose to seize the harvests of the Ukraine and to supplement their command of the Rumanian petroleum by a seizure of the oil fields of the Caucasus. Thirdly, the disabling of Soviet Russia and the pact with the Finnish Whites made it possible to plan the establishment of a submarine base on the Arctic Ocean, just as their possession of the Black Sea littoral formed a base for repelling the upward thrust of the British troops from Mesopotamia and Persia—or even, in the imagination of the more adventurist soldiers, for opening the high road to Persia and Hindustan.

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The attitude of the allied and associated Powers was less capable of definition. It might seem that their military interests dictated to them the need of making the best of a bad bargain and of proffering their help to the Soviets for a resistance to the German encroachments. Indeed, it was under such a pretext that the first troops of the Allied Powers were sent to Russia. That it was only a pretext soon became clear. Allied statesmen and military chiefs strove to inculcate through their speeches and "inspired" articles in the Press the belief that the Bolsheviks were "German agents," and that Russian territory must continue to be treated as a theatre of war. Significant facts, such as the open adherence of Milyukoff, the former Secretary of Foreign Affairs, to the German side, they glossed over. The "German agents" myth was only one example of a manifold Allied propaganda by which they sought to compromise the Bolsheviks in the eyes of the working people of their own countries. For there were many class-conscious politicians to whom a Socialist Society existed only in order to be crushed. They agreed with Mr. Winston Churchill's view that the Bolsheviks were a worse enemy to civilisation than the Prussians—the "Huns."

Accordingly the foreign invasions and intervention began. Within a few months after the October Revolution had been established throughout almost the entire territory of former Tsarist Russia, the troops of the invading Powers or their hirelings had occupied the vast majority of that territory and were seeking to hem in the Soviet Government to a fraction of European Russia. Under the instigation and direction of French imperialism, armies of Czecho-Slovakian prisoners of war

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were brought together and organised in May 1918 they rose in insurrection and seized part of the railway-line through the Urals into Siberia. Under their protection, in the Urals and along part of the Volga a so-called Constituent Assembly<sup>1</sup> Government was set up, with Avksentieff at its head and Ufa as its centre, and this claimed a primacy amongst the various anti-Soviet nuclei.

A British expedition was landed on the Murmansk coast, and another occupied Archangel and advanced down towards Vologda and Viatka (now called Kirov). Americans and a number of other nationalities formed part of this force, whose supreme commanders were British army officers. A Japanese force occupied Vladivostok, advanced through the Far East and Siberia, where they joined up with the Czecho-Slovaks. The main American force was with the British at Archangel, a second force disembarked at Vladivostok, partly to add strength to the intervention and partly to watch the Japanese. Another British expedition, comically called the "Dunster-Force," pushed up through Persia from Mesopotamia, occupied the south of the Caspian Sea, and brought Sepoy troops into Trans-Caspia, including

<sup>1</sup> The dissolution of the Constituent Assembly has not been dealt with in the narrative, partly because the importance of this episode has been much exaggerated. As will have been apparent, the reality of the situation in 1917 was the dual control, the struggle for power between the bourgeoisie, dominating various successive Provisional Governments, and the working class organised in the Soviets. In this struggle, which divided Russia, the Constituent Assembly became a pawn in the game played by the bourgeoisie. When the Constituent Assembly finally met in January 1918, the dualism had already been resolved, the cry of "All Power to the Soviets" had become a fact. When it refused to recognise this fact, the Assembly was promptly dissolved.

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Turkmenistan A volunteer army of Whites, protected in the north by General Krassnov, who received his armies from the German imperialists, and supported by counter-revolutionary sections of the Terek and Kuban Cossacks, consolidated its position in the Northern Caucasus

Against this chain of invasions what force could the Soviet Government oppose? The old Tsarist army had been demobilised in March, or, at any rate, so much of it as had not already deserted. With remarkable energy the Soviet Government began construction of a new army, the Red Army, in which were embodied, bit by bit, the Red Guards who had helped to carry through the revolution and the various bands of volunteers occupied in guerilla warfare, called in Russia the Partisan troops. By the end of six months a severe check had been given to the forces of intervention, and a Red Army was in being. With the armistice and the German Revolution of November 1918, the pressure from the side of the German militarists was relaxed, though one of the stipulations made by the victorious Allies was that the German troops must not be withdrawn from the border regions until military forces satisfactory to the Allies had taken their place.

### 2. THE ATTACK INTENSIFIED

But the relaxation of the German pressure was the signal for an intensified attack by the allied capitalist Powers. No sooner was the armistice signed than the French fleet entered the Black Sea, transports were sent to Novorossisk with military supplies for Denikin's army,



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and several divisions of French troops were landed in the Crimea and at Odessa. At the same time, the conclusion of the armistice had enabled the rest of the Allies to devote more attention to the military problem of conquering the Bolsheviks.

By the end of the winter the Socialist Soviet Republic was in an extremely unfavourable situation. In the south, in addition to the activities of Generals Krassnov and Dutoff at the head of the Cossacks of the Don and the Caspian regions, the armies of General Denikin, operating in conjunction with French, Greek, and Rumanian detachments on the line of the Dniester, had pushed up from Odessa in a wide fan, the easternmost tip of which lay upon the lower Volga. In the north, the British forces and the White troops, under the puppet Government of the Social-Revolutionary Chaikovsky, had moved from Archangel down the Pechora and the Dvina until it seemed possible that their attack, together with the British warships on the Baltic and the activities of the White Finns, would succeed in "liberating" northern and north-eastern Russia from Bolshevism. But as the spring of 1919 advanced, the most formidable enemy of the Republic appeared to be the forces under the command of Kolchak.

Admiral Kolchak was the successor of the Constituent Assembly Government of Siberia. On November 18th, 1918, the directorate of this Government had been dissolved through a *coup d'état*, and several of its members put in prison by Kolchak, who assumed power under the title of "Supreme Ruler." With Japanese and British help he organised the fighting forces of the counter-revolution and began a westward move towards Moscow.

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One after another the strategic positions in the west of Siberia fell before him, the border into European Russia was crossed, and the line of the upper Volga approached. As his successes grew, so the other Provisional Governments of the counter-revolution began to recognise his supreme authority. Finally, when his star in the East appeared to be nearing its zenith, the allied and associated Powers (France, Britain, Italy, the United States, and Japan) sent a despatch to Admiral Kolchak promising their assistance and stating their terms. The despatch, which was dated May 26th, 1919, began thus: "First, as soon as the Government of Admiral Kolchak and his associates reach Moscow . . ."

Alas, by the time that Allies had made this decision, Kolchak's troops were already in full retreat. The latter part of May had seen a complete reversal of the position on the Volga-Ural front. And the Red Armies had begun their steady drive eastwards through Siberia for over a thousand miles, which ended at Irkutsk, on Lake Baikal, with the complete disappearance of the counter-revolution as a military force. The repulse of Kolchak was followed by a series of rapid blows at the army of Denikin, and the consequent contraction of his frontiers.

Meantime the southward movement of the Archangel troops to Vologda, there to meet the right wing of Kolchak's army, had convinced British workers that all the pretexts were false and that there was no longer anything but a deliberate invasion of Russia. The triple industrial alliance of railwaymen, transport workers, and miners, the chairman of which was Robert Smilie, was threatening to strike unless British troops were withdrawn. The labour agitations thus begun culminated in

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the summoning of an international strike for July 21st. The strike was effective only in a few countries, but enough had happened in that early summer of 1919 to make it clear that the organised workers of Europe looked upon Russia and "the Russian problem" with very different eyes from the capitalist Government. They were no longer willing to acquiesce in the suppression of a Socialist Republic for the crime of being Socialist. At the same time there was a mutiny of the French sailors in the Black Sea, headed by André Marty, and there were minor mutinies and a very ugly situation amongst the troops under British command in northern Russia. This, together with the fear of British labour, was a sufficient stimulus for the War Office to withdraw the troops from Archangel. The British fleet, however, remained in Soviet waters, and remained active.

All throughout this period the intervention had not been limited to invasions and support of counter-revolutionary Governments. There had been large sums poured out in support of espionage, wrecking, and terror. The British Government admitted spending more than £100,000,000, the cost of which is still being borne by the British taxpayer, in assistance given in the shape of munitions and all supplies of war to Denikin, Kolchak, Yudenitch, and other generals. The amount expended on secret service work, espionage, wrecking, and terrorism has never been divulged. Suffice it that the special organisation created by the Soviet Government found its hands full. Six weeks after the revolution, on December 20th, 1917, a Decree of the Council of People's Commissars created an All-Russia Extraordinary Commission to combat counter-revolution, commonly called

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the "Cheka," under the chairmanship of Djerjinsky. Despite the activities of this organisation, whose business was to deal with spies, bandits, wreckers, etc., there were many attempts at assassination, in some of which foreign consuls were implicated. In the beginning of September 1918, Uritsky and Volodarsky, two leading Communists, were assassinated in Petrograd. At the same time the assassin Fanny Kaplan, a member of the Social-Revolutionary Party, emptied a revolver into Lenin as he was coming away from a workers' meeting.

This triple blow was met by a mass terror, which, in a few weeks, proved as efficacious as the similar terror under the French Revolution. Within a few weeks Lenin was able to resume his work, but a lasting injury had been inflicted on his health.

In the beginning of 1919 the veil of darkness that had been cast over events in Russia, and had obscured what was happening from Western eyes, began to be torn asunder. Throughout the whole world, the demobilised soldiers were returning home and the workers in industry were shaking loose from the bonds imposed upon them in wartime.

Simultaneously with the meetings of the allied War Council at Versailles, the various opportunist Socialists, who up to now had been denouncing one another and backing "their own" capitalist Governments, thought the time ripe to come together once more. At Berne, Switzerland, there was called a meeting of pro-war Socialists. In this the revolutionary Socialists refused to participate. In Moscow, a meeting was called on March 2nd to form the Third International. Lenin presided, and the meeting became the Communist International's first

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Congress From this moment onwards, in addition to the general support of the working class throughout the world for the Socialist Republics of Russia, there was added the complete adherence, in an organised form, of revolutionary Socialists to Leninism

The early summer of 1919 had seen the defeat of Kolchak and the withdrawal of the Archangel forces, the late summer and early autumn witnessed once more an unfavourable situation. A certain degree of disorganisation of the southern front had enabled Denikin to advance up through the Ukraine as far as Oriol and Tula, only about 200 kilometres south of Moscow. Also in that autumn, with the support of the British Admiralty, there was launched a sudden attack on Petrograd by General Yudenitch. It was a close call but the rallying of the workers of Petrograd saved the situation in the north, while in the south the tide began to turn against Denikin.

### 3 THE POLES AND THE END OF WRANGEL

During each winter from 1918-19 to 1920-21, it was the custom of the capitalist Powers to carry on negotiations with the Bolsheviks. Each year, as the spring advanced and movements of troops became possible, negotiations were dropped and military operations resumed. In the spring of 1920 the forces of the newly constituted Poland, whose "Chief of State" was Marshal Joseph Pilsudski, launched a tremendous attack, and on April 26th invaded the Ukraine. As soon as these troops appeared to be reaching a measure of success, King George V sent a congratulatory telegram to Marshal Pilsudski expressing pleasure that it was now the first

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anniversary of the foundation of the Polish State. There is no record of King George V sending any subsequent telegrams on the fifth, tenth, or fifteenth anniversaries of the Polish State

The Polish armies were able to seize Kiev, the capital of the Ukraine, and were advancing triumphantly when, at Jitumir, Budyenny's Red cavalry broke through the Polish lines. Within a few days the Polish armies were in headlong rout. In their retreat into Poland, the Red Army was at their heels. The Red Army crossed the border, and a Red cavalry raid reached the outskirts of Warsaw. It was a daring raid which, if it had been successful, would have shattered the Treaty of Versailles. Outside Warsaw, the Red Armies were defeated by the reinforcements which France and Britain had rapidly hurried to the support of their Polish puppet State.

The alarm in the West had been widespread amongst the politicians. Against the onward rush of the Red Army, the British and French Governments took council together with their chiefs of staff. Everything was being made ready to renew the war against Soviet Russia. At this point, the beginning of August 1920, there were formed in Britain Councils of Action, the object of which was to stop the war against Soviet Russia. So universal was the response, not only from the working class, but from the war-weary petty-bourgeoisie of Britain, that Lloyd George, then Prime Minister, was compelled to announce the withdrawal of the British Government from schemes of intervention. The formation of the Councils of Action had been preceded by strike action in the London docks against the *Jolly George*, a ship loaded with munitions for Poland.

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By the autumn of 1920, peace negotiations had started between Poland and the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic.

Meantime, on the southern front, the forces of Denikin were being reorganised under the command of General Wrangel, and with the assistance of the Marquess Curzon, British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, who had earlier pleaded with the Soviets to allow Wrangel to evacuate the Crimea. Wrangel was more capable than Denikin. He commenced an advance towards Moscow in the late autumn. The Red Army swung round. The cavalry made a wide sweeping movement. Wrangel's forces were driven back into the Crimea, where they endeavoured to hold the fortress of Pericop, at the neck of the Isthmus. The fortress of Pericop was taken by storm, at the cost of 20,000 casualties. The last invaders and the last White troops had been cleared out of European Russia.

It began to become clear to the capitalists that it was necessary to make peace. The negotiations for a trade agreement, begun in January of 1920 and hopefully suspended by the British Government during the Polish offensive and again during Wrangel's offensive, were resumed. But, under one pretext or another, the agreement could never reach the stage of being signed. The British Foreign Office kept insisting that an obstacle was the alleged interference of the Soviet Government with its propaganda inside the British Empire. In February 1921 it was discovered that the British Government had been carrying on counter-revolutionary propaganda inside Russia, and that Scotland Yard had actually been responsible for a forged edition of *Pravda*,

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which was being distributed inside Russia with a view to causing insurrection against the Soviet authorities. Within a few days after this awkward discovery the trade agreement was signed

So long as the forces of the counter-revolution held the Crimea and the northern shores of the Black Sea, it had been possible for a Menshevik Government to maintain itself in Georgia under the leadership of Noah Jordania, under the protection of the Western capitalist Powers, or, at any rate, of the oil magnates. A rising in Georgia of the workers enabled this last stronghold of the counter-revolution, which had been described curiously by Mr Ramsay MacDonald as a "typical I L P State," to become Soviet territory in January 1921. Operations against Asiatic counter-revolution, both in midmost Asia and in the Far East, which the Japanese did not finally evacuate until the end of 1922, were to continue for several more years. In the West, in the winter of 1921-2, the White Finns attacked the R S F S R., and in the repulse of this attempt a Red Finn named Antikainen played a vigorous part for which he was subsequently, in 1937, sentenced to imprisonment for life. But, in essentials, the civil wars were concluded, after three years of terrible devastation, in the spring of 1921. On all fronts the Soviet Government had been victorious

### 4 MILITARY COMMUNISM

In 1918, when the new ruling class of Russia had to face the chaos left by the Tsardom and the capitalists, a primitive agriculture disorganised by war, an undeveloped industry diverted from peaceful ends and



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collapsing under the strains of 1914 to 1917, they had to frame a policy whose content was indicated at the end of the last chapter. But that policy had to be modified and developed in accordance with military political circumstances. After the summer of 1918, military necessity was the first factor in deciding policy. Under this supreme pressure there was evolved a form of exchange which was called by the name of "Military Communism." The original bargain, so to speak, between the peasants and the proletariat had been that Soviet power would give the peasants the use of the land, and would exchange the products of industry for the products of the soil. To that bargain military necessity said "No." Not only the products of the soil, but the whole of the products of heavy industry, had to be requisitioned for the needs of the Red Army. The bargain had to be transformed. Instead of receiving the products of industry, the peasants received the protection of the Red Army against their embattled landlords and, in return for this protection, all grain beyond the needs of the peasant family was requisitioned for civil and military purposes. Needless to say, though the peasants as a whole understood the implications of the bargain—else Kolchak would have conquered—many of them as individuals, and especially the kulaks, resented this requisition of grain just as in every capitalist country throughout the war the farmers and peasants resented any interference with the famine prices brought about by the operation of increased demand. The consequence of this was that for three years throughout the whole of Russia there was no buying and selling. Grain was grown and reaped, and the whole of the surplus was

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taken by the State for distribution as rations amongst the army, the munition workers, and the rest of the population

There was a war The result was—Military Communism

Political necessity was the second factor The first effect of the Bolshevik Revolution had been almost complete sabotage on the part of all the professional classes and the technically skilled strata of the middle class In the numerous memoirs published in Britain and America, it is on record that for two weeks, for two months, for six months, for eight months after November 1917, hardly anyone in the intellectual circles of Russia believed that the Bolshevik Government would last for more than a couple of days Many of the *émigrés* in western Europe continued to hold that view of the impending collapse of Bolshevism for at least another ten years A belief of this kind is the mainspring of sabotage This sabotage had to be broken down

In the case of the small businesses of merchants and traders and minor manufacturers, whose houses and premises were centres of counter-revolutionary activity, political necessity demanded their expropriation Thus the Soviet Government, by the need of striking down these adversaries, was compelled to nationalise on a large scale Not that the necessity was displeasing to them The result was that, under the pressure of political and military necessity, enterprises were nationalised to an extent considerably beyond what had been contemplated by the Soviet Government when drawing up its programme of work in the spring of 1918. Similar necessities have occurred in the case of other civil wars As in the

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civil wars of the seventeenth century in England, and in the civil war that began in Spain in 1936, the property of opponents was confiscated or nationalised. In the case of Russia, this immediate military necessity chimed with the ultimate aims of the revolution. Therefore, even when the pressure of military necessity began to be relaxed, a large proportion of the Communist Party were in favour of continuing the method of Military Communism.

The resulting situation that confronted the Bolsheviks in the spring of 1921 is dealt with in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER IV

# RESTORATION

### I THE NEW ECONOMIC POLICY

**I**N THE SPRING OF 1921, the civil war in the main was over. The devastation had been terrific. The means of production had been destroyed. Over five million men had been withdrawn from production into the Red Army. The necessary policy of Military Communism had secured the minimum needs of the population, but at the cost of a diminishing return of agriculture. Economically, Russia appeared to be ruined. Total production had sunk to one-fifth of the pre-war level both in industry and agriculture.

The Tenth Congress of the Party, convened in the spring of 1921, had to meet this situation and find a solution. The Congress was preceded by a prolonged discussion, in which various false solutions were put forward by Trotsky, Bucharin, and others. The discussion became an inner Party struggle, in which Lenin, Stalin, and the majority of the Central Committee eventually defeated the platforms of Bucharin and Trotsky. Lenin's proposals, adopted by the Congress, were for a radical turn—which was to receive the name of the New Economic Policy. Briefly put, this policy abolished War Communism, restored to the peasants the right to sell their products on the open market, and thus enabled the

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petty-bourgeoisie to start business. The peasant had to pay a tax in kind. This once paid, he was free to dispose of the remainder of his grain or other produce. At the same time every effort was made, through all kinds of co-operative societies, to accustom the peasants to collective work. The small capitalist was once again allowed to carry on his business, but with a stimulated competition from Consumers' Co-operative Societies and State enterprises.

In this plan for the restoration of agriculture and industry the Dictatorship of the Proletariat retained the following main positions: (1) The nationalised land, (2) Banking and the monopoly of foreign trade; (3) Heavy industry, (4) The railways as well as the Red Army, Red Fleet, etc. On these there was no question of retreat. For the rest, it was a strategic retreat on the economic front in order to prepare for a subsequent advance. This advance would be slower but shorter, said Lenin: it would proceed with a greater mass of the whole population and finally would develop at a pace undreamt of.

Following on this revival of private, small capitalist production, of buying and selling, there revived with it all the apparatus of petty trading and some of the apparatus of wholesale trading. Enterprises and shops opened once more on a profit-making basis. Everything had to be submitted to the commercial test. Accordingly, this meant a progressive denationalisation not merely of small factories but of some of the larger works, and even of branch lines on the railways. The ordinary business test—"Will it pay?"—had to be applied almost everywhere. Finally, the re-establishment of the credit and

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financial system had to be tackled, the rouble had to be established, the State budget balanced by other means than the emission of paper money. The Soviet State had to retreat very far, to contract the area of its operations, to leave a wide field for profit-making and private enterprise.

With ill-concealed delight, the capitalist Governments of Europe beheld what they imagined was the restoration of capitalism in Soviet Russia. It proved, they thought, what they had always maintained—that Socialism was impossible, not in one country, but in any country at any time. They thought it would do no harm to hasten the process and to use every method of compulsion upon the Bolsheviks. Accordingly, when in the summer of 1921 there took place a recurrence on the Volga of one of those dreadful famines which had periodically recurred in Tsarist times and were banished for ever by the subsequent Socialist development, Lloyd George and others made very notable speeches offering humanitarian assistance to the famine-stricken millions on the Volga. But it turned out that only the organisations headed by Nansen and the Quakers of Britain and America actually gave any assistance, for the Governments had stipulated the complete restoration of capitalism in the former territories of the Tsar as the price of their assistance to the starving.

Still under the illusion that the Bolsheviks had seen the error of their ways and were reluctantly "advancing" towards capitalism, the capitalist Powers abandoned the boycott of Soviet Russia and invited the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic to participate in the Conference of Genoa held in the spring of 1922. There it

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was coolly proposed that capitalism should be completely restored. They were disillusioned: and both at Genoa and at the Lausanne Conference of autumn 1922 on the question of Turkey and the Straits, the growing power of the R.S.F.S.R. had to be recognised.

Actually, of course, there was a very clear perspective before the Bolshevik Party—through a period of the New Economic Policy to advance to Socialist Russia. This was clearly envisaged and stated by Lenin in the last periods of his activity; it was clearly envisaged and stated by Stalin, on whose shoulders from 1922 onward fell the main burden of carrying through the Bolshevik programme.

### 2. THE U.S.S.R.

At the end of 1922 it was agreed to gather the various Socialist Soviet Republics into a union. The Constitution of the new Union of Socialist Soviet Republics was finally ratified by the Congress of Soviets at the opening of 1924. The Union of Socialist Soviet Republics consisted, to begin with, of four units—the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic, the Ukrainian S.S.R., the Byelorussian S.S.R. and Trans-Caucasian S.F.S.R.; in 1925, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan entered the Union, and, four years later, Tadzhikistan.

The formation of the Soviet Union was a fact of the greatest significance. It was the expression of the national policy of the Bolsheviks. The care of this cornerstone of Bolshevik policy had been entrusted in 1917 to Stalin, who became the Commissar of Nationalities in the Council of People's Commissars.

Stalin before the war had devoted particular attention

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and study to the national and colonial question, to the slogan of "the right of self-determination of the peoples" On the basis of Marx's teachings, the International Socialist Congress of 1896 had made the right of self-determination an integral part of Socialist policy But the elaboration of this principle over a period of forty years, and its practical application, was the work of Lenin and Stalin At the famous 1902 Congress there was already a struggle over this question in the programme Both the opportunists and the sectarian "Leftists" fought against this Socialist principle In one way or another the struggle was continued right up to the war In the years of reaction and of revival, both Lenin and Stalin wrote extensively on this question, carrying on a struggle against opponents within the ranks of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, and, within the Second International, against Rosa Luxembourg The war made it a burning question. The revolution made it possible to solve this burning question in a Bolshevik manner The culmination of five years of Stalin's work, carried on amid a hundred other activities, was the formation of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics.

The Bolshevik leadership of Stalin, already tested for nearly twenty-five years in the struggle against Tsardom, in the internal Party struggle, in the insurrection and in the civil war, had now to go through the prolonged ordeal of a renewed period of Party struggle Lenin, whose illness, caused by the bullets of the assassin Kaplan, began to develop in 1921, had become worse in health in 1922, and then, after a short period of recovery, had entered his last sickness in the spring of 1923 During this last illness, the struggle which Trotsky and



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others had carried on up to 1917 outside the ranks of the Bolsheviks, and from 1917 onwards inside the ranks of the Bolshevik Party against the line of Lenin and the majority of the Central Committee, now broke out afresh. With the content and meaning of this struggle we deal in the next chapter. For long, discussions raged within the Party. From autumn 1923 for a year and a half the discussion lasted, at the end of which time the Trotskyist opposition was defeated. Within a few months, Trotsky had formed a *bloc* with Zinoviev and Kamenev and resumed the struggle, so that, with hardly any intermission, the struggle went on during the whole period up till 1927. At the end of 1927 the remoteness of Trotsky from a Bolshevik policy, and the factional measures taken against the Party, including the attempt to launch an anti-Soviet demonstration on the tenth-year anniversary of the Revolution, led to his exclusion from the Party, followed at the end of 1928 by his exclusion from the Soviet Union as an element alien to Socialism and to the working class.

During these years, in spite of this opposition within the Party, the work of restoration went steadily on. By the end of 1927—the tenth anniversary of the Revolution—not only had the work of economic restoration been completed, but the economy of the country was already in its level of production, well above the pre-war stage. It should be remembered that, as late as 1929, British economy was still below the pre-war level. Such progress in the U.S.S.R. had been made that as regards the material conditions of the working class the tenth anniversary of the Revolution saw the proclamation of the seven-hour day.

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On the international field in this period there may be singled out three features which show the development of the Russian Revolution. The first, the development of the Communist International, falls outside the limit of this short history. The second is the assistance given by the masses of workers and peasants in the Soviet Union to the strike struggle of the British workers in 1926. During the prolonged seven-months' miners' strike, the largest single trade union strike of such duration in working-class history anywhere, the solidarity of the workers in other countries was expressed by the help they were able to send. By collections, the Russian masses sent over one million pounds sterling to help the starving miners of Britain. Third, in relations with capitalist Governments, the most significant feature was the entry into the Disarmament Commission which, set up at the time of the Versailles Treaty, began its work in 1927. The Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Maxim Litvinov, in the interests of peace proposed complete immediate and total disarmament. The proposal was rejected. Later, he proposed partial disarmament. The proposal was rejected. Later still, when President Hoover proposed a substantial cut in armaments, the Soviet Union supported this, and, when the Americans themselves did not vote for this proposal, the Soviet Union brought it forward. Again it was rejected.

It was from this time onwards that throughout the world it began to be realised that the Power which to the greatest extent was pursuing the policy of peace was the Soviet Union. When Japan and Germany left the League of Nations in 1933, the Soviet Union entered; and its entry under these conditions sufficed to transform the

## RESTORATION

League from a Council of victor States for enforcing the Versailles Treaties into an instrument which could be an obstacle to the aims of the warmongers.

## CHAPTER V

# THE SOCIALIST OFFENSIVE

### I SOCIALIST INDUSTRIALISATION

BY THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY of the Revolution the *restoration* of industry was completed, and made possible the advance to higher levels both in economic forms and in production. Only the very first steps had been taken so far in the direction of Socialist *reconstruction*. The U S S R was still an agrarian country, still an ocean of agriculture with islands of industry, still backward and partly medieval in its technique

Of pre-revolutionary Russia Lenin had said that it was "equipped with modern implements of production one-fourth that of Great Britain" Ten years ago, in 1927-8, the U.S.S.R. was in these respects not far advanced upon Tsarist Russia. To make such a country Socialist, not only in its direction (that had been the case since 1917), but in its *social-economic forms*, was a formidable task The problem of building Socialism in the U S S R depended in the first place upon the creation of a modern large-scale machine-industry, capable of producing the means of production. Without this as the foundation, there could be no transformation of N.E.P. Russia into *Socialist* Russia. How long would it take? With what means would it be carried through? With what resources? Against what resistance? What class forces had

## THE SOCIALIST OFFENSIVE

to be taken into account? Already some preliminary answers had been formed to these and other such questions with the growth and extension of *planning* since the Civil War, notably in the Goelro (electrification plan of 1920) and in the subsequent annual control figures. But now the answer was to be given in a fuller way. By 1927-8 restoration was complete. The time was at last ripe for further advance. Accordingly, the next year there began the Socialist offensive. This took the form of the famous "Pyatiletka," or Five-Year Plan. When the plan was announced by which the productive capacity of the Soviet Union, under Socialist economic forms, was to be more than doubled in five years, it was regarded throughout Europe and America as a fantastic dream. Solemn articles were written proving that the Five-Year Plan was economically and from every point of view impossible. Serious doubts were expressed of the sanity of the leaders of the Bolshevik Party.

The plan had been drawn up in two variant forms. The second, or optimum, variant had been proposed only if certain exceptionally favourable conditions were present. As it turned out, none of these conditions was present in the years 1929 and onwards. On the contrary, particularly unfavourable conditions existed. Nevertheless, not only did the Soviet Congress adopt the optimum variant, but the masses of the Soviet Union, millions working to a single end, also adopted it. It meant privation; it meant tightening the belt; but the masses themselves had willed it and were determined to see it through. An immense fire of enthusiasm swept through the country. Everywhere was seen the slogan, "The Five-Year Plan in four years!" The slogan became an

## THE SOCIALIST OFFENSIVE

irresistible mass force. By the end of 1932, in four and a quarter years from its start, the "impossible," "absurd," "fantastic" Five-Year Plan had been completed, had become reality

The plan had been fulfilled as a whole, but there were revealed weaknesses and unexpected strengths. In the first Five-Year Plan, steel, transport, and labour productivity did not fulfil expectations. But there were three aspects where the achievements far outran expectation. The first was unemployment, the second was the new metallurgical base in Siberia and the Urals; the third, as will be seen later, was the collectivisation of the countryside.

With the survival of capitalist economic forms in the period up to the Five-Year Plan, there had also been the survival of unemployment, though on nothing like the scale of capitalist countries. It was contemplated under the first Five-Year Plan that unemployment would be greatly reduced. What was unexpected for the Soviet Government, and astounding to the rest of the world, was the complete abolition of unemployment by the summer of 1930. It was the more astounding because the tidings of a Land Without Unemployment began to be told to the workers throughout the world at the very time when in the other countries the greatest onset of unemployment in history was ravaging homes and spreading starvation. Crisis and decline of capitalist industry had coincided with the rise of Socialist industry. The contrast was startling. If we take the output of industry in capitalist countries in 1928 and 1932, measure it by an index number, giving its volume, we have the following result.

### THE SOCIALIST OFFENSIVE

	1928	1932
Great Britain	100	88
France	100	76
Germany	100	61
U S A	100	58
U S S R.	100	233

If we take in this same period the capitalist world and compare it with its historic rival, the nascent world of Socialism, the index numbers showed a recession from 100 to 67 for capitalist countries, an advance from 100 to 233 for Socialism

For many years the only Russian metallurgical base—that is, heavy industry, coal, iron and steel, chemicals—had been in the Don Basin. Before the end of the first Five-Year Plan there had been constructed a second metallurgical base, the famous Ural-Kuznetsk Combinat, in which the rich iron-ores of Magnitogorsk were combined with the coal of Kuznetsk Basin in Siberia. All along the Trans-Siberian Railway for a thousand miles, what had previously been untilled or sparsely cultivated land was now to become a hive of industry, and especially heavy industry. This second metallurgical base, begun in the first Five-Year Plan, signified a tremendous increase in the material well-being of the people as well as in the defensive capacity of the Soviet Union. Now, together with all the other supplements to the Five-Year Plan of which it was the type, the metallurgical base and the machine-building signified that the U S S. R. had become a land of heavy industry, transformed from an agrarian into an industrial country.

## THE SOCIALIST OFFENSIVE

The economic basis for Socialism had been well and truly laid

### 2. OBSTACLES AND STRUGGLE

This first Five-Year Plan was only carried through in the face of a stiff Party struggle and in face of attempts at wrecking. The attempts at wrecking were at first organised from outside by former Russian capitalists and counter-revolutionaries acting in conjunction with foreign Governments. There were technicians who devoted their skill, not to building up, but to tearing down, not to planning, but to wrecking of plans. In 1928 occurred the Schacht trial of wreckers, in 1930, the trial of the so-called "Industrial Party" headed by Professor Ramzin, in 1931, the Menshevik trial in which Suchanov was perhaps the most prominent figure. In 1933 there was the trial of the Metro-Vickers engineers—which, because it included amongst those accused and found guilty a number of Englishmen, was made the subject of diplomatic exchanges between the British and Soviet Governments. Throughout, the Socialist offensive was accompanied by a counter-offensive from the encircling capitalist countries.

The resistance on the part of the "Lefts," headed by Trotsky, had begun earlier and had developed, in the alliance with Zinoviev and Kamenev, into an extremely bitter conflict during 1926-7. The Leftist standpoint took a variety of forms, but the essence of it lay in the Trotskyist slogan that it was "impossible to build Socialism in one country." This had its roots back in the old 1905 standpoint, in what Lenin had described as "the absurdly 'Left' theory of permanent revolution."



## THE SOCIALIST OFFENSIVE

How did Trotsky himself place this question? In the preface to his book entitled *The Year 1905*, he says

“ It was during the interval between January 9th and the general strike of October 1905 that the views on the character of the revolutionary development of Russia, which came to be known as the theory of the ‘ permanent revolution,’ gradually crystallised in the author’s mind. This somewhat complicated term represented a rather simple idea, though the immediate objectives of the Russian Revolution were bourgeois in nature, the revolution, upon achieving its objectives, would not stop there. The revolution would not be able to solve its immediate bourgeois problems except by placing the proletariat in power. And the latter, upon assuming power, would not be able to limit itself to the bourgeois framework of the revolution. On the contrary, precisely in order to secure its victory the proletarian vanguard would be forced in the very early stages of its rule to make deep inroads, not only into feudal property, but into capitalist property as well. In this the proletariat will come into *hostile collision* not only with the bourgeois groupings which supported the proletariat during the first stages of revolutionary struggle, *but also with the broad masses of the peasants* who were instrumental in bringing it into power. The contradictions in the situation of the workers’ Government in a backward country with an overwhelming majority of peasants can be solved only on an international scale, on the arena of the world proletarian revolution ”

In reply to this, Stalin had only to compare Lenin’s

## THE SOCIALIST OFFENSIVE

expressed views for the chasm to become apparent between Lenin's theory of the dictatorship and Trotsky's theory of "permanent revolution"

"Lenin," wrote Stalin, "speaks of the *alliance* of the proletariat and the toiling strata of the peasantry as the foundation of the dictatorship of the proletariat. In Trotsky we find the '*hostile collusion*' of the proletarian vanguard' with 'the broad masses of the peasants'

"Lenin speaks of the *leadership* of the toiling and exploited masses by the proletariat. In Trotsky we find '*contradictions* in the situation of the workers' Government in a backward country with an overwhelming majority of peasants'

"According to Lenin, the revolution draws its forces chiefly from among the workers and peasants of Russia itself. According to Trotsky, the necessary forces can be found *only* 'on the arena of the world proletarian revolution'

"But what is to happen if the world revolution is fated to arrive with some delay? Is there any ray of hope for our revolution? Comrade Trotsky does not admit any ray of hope, for 'the contradictions in the situation of the workers' Government . . . can be solved *only*, on the arena of the world proletarian revolution.' According to this, there is but one prospect left for our revolution to vegetate in its own contradictions and decay to its roots while waiting for the world revolution

"What is the dictatorship of the proletariat, according to Lenin?"

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“The dictatorship of the proletariat is the power which relies on the alliance between the proletariat and the toiling masses of the peasantry for ‘the complete overthrow of capital’ and ‘the final establishment and consolidation of Socialism’

“What is the dictatorship of the proletariat, according to Trotsky?”

“The dictatorship of the proletariat is a power which enters ‘into hostile collision with the broad masses of the peasants’ and seeks the solution of its ‘contradictions’ *merely* ‘on the arena of the world proletarian revolution’

“In what respect does this ‘theory of the permanent revolution’ differ from the well-known theory of Menshevism which repudiates the concept. dictatorship of the proletariat?”

“In substance there is no difference.”<sup>1</sup>

During this long discussion—and also since—several attempts were made by Trotskyists to show that Lenin could not possibly have meant what he said when in 1915 he had written.

“Uneven economic and political development is an absolute law of capitalism. Hence the victory of Socialism is possible first in a few or even in one single capitalist country taken separately.”

To-day, with the victory of Socialism in the U S S R, these Trotskyist writings exhibit the same effect of insanity as is conveyed by the “proofs” of the Narod-

<sup>1</sup> Stalin, *The October Revolution*, pp 102-3, Co-op Publishers, Moscow

## THE SOCIALIST OFFENSIVE

niki (see Vol. I. Ch. I) that Russia would not pass through the stage of capitalism

When the Party referendum was taken in 1927, after years of prolonged and exhaustive discussion, Trotsky and his adherents received 4,000 votes. If abstentions, etc., be taken into account, then perhaps 12,000 at the outside sympathised one way or another with Trotskyism. No less than 724,000 voted for the Bolsheviks.

Scarcely had the struggle with the Trotsky-Zinoviev *bloc* finished than an opportunist Right Wing emerged, headed by Rykov, chairman of the Council of People's Commissars. With him were Bucharin and Tomsky, general secretary of the trade unions. They were against the class struggle for the realisation of the planned Socialist reorganisation of national economy, they thought the kulaks would grow into Socialism peacefully, and Bucharin gave out the slogan to the kulaks, "Enrich yourselves." They were against the building up of heavy industry, against the Five-Year Plan of industrialisation, for which they wished to substitute a two-year plan of "aid to agriculture." In practice, this would have meant the further development of the kulaks and jeopardising the gains of the revolution.

How strong the kulaks had grown in these last few years was shown by their refusal to sell grain to the Government.

Anything less than the Five-Year Plan, with all the hardship it inevitably entailed on the population, a hardship willingly accepted, would have meant a victory of the kulaks. The attitude of the Right opportunists (who, it may be mentioned, entered into an agreement

## THE SOCIALIST OFFENSIVE

with the Left) was most fully developed by Bucharin. He presented a picture of the whole world as one in which capitalism was becoming organised, in which the class struggle within each country was likely to be softened, and, accordingly, the tactics of the Communist Parties would be affected. This standpoint did not differ very far from some of the Social-Democrats who, again, had much the same outlook on this matter as some of the liberal capitalists. The difference between the standpoint of the Bolsheviks and the Right Wing can be crystallised on the international field on one significant question.

It is part of the method of science to be able to predict. A false prediction casts doubt on the validity of the scientific premises. The Right opportunists predicted that sharp economic crises would be avoided in future by capitalism, and therefrom deduced that the sharpness of the class struggle in each country would be dulled. In practice, it can be seen, this represented an attempt to demobilise the working class in its struggle. The implications of this were worked out for each country. In the Soviet Union it implied the avoiding of a sharp class struggle with the kulaks.

Stalin predicted in 1928 the coming of an economic crisis, and reaffirmed this in the spring of 1929. In the spring of 1929, Stalin's arguments destroyed theoretically the arguments put forward by Bucharin and Rykov and the others of the Right Wing. The outbreak of the world economic crisis in October 1929 demonstrated the correctness of Stalin's policy with the same finality as was achieved by Galileo's experiment from the leaning tower of Pisa.

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### 3' COLLECTIVISATION

The collectivisation of agriculture—that is, the pooling of the means of production into a common stock so as to form an *artel* (a productive co-operative society of a special kind)—had begun in 1929, in the first year of the first Five-Year Plan. The sweep of collectivisation was unexpected. During the restoration period, up to the end of 1927, by model collective farms as well as by co-operative societies, progress had been made in getting the Russian peasantry to understand the need for collective agriculture. There had been sixteen million peasant households before the revolution in 1917, ten years later, after the sharing out of the church land and the big estates, there were twenty-five million peasant households. Before 1917 millions of peasants were landless, millions hungered. As a consequence of revolution the peasants had more to eat than in Tsarist days. The peasant method of agriculture remained primitive. In many cases they were without draught animals. At the beginning of the Five-Year Plan there were still five million wooden ploughs in use in the U.S.S.R. Nearly half the harvest was still reaped by scythe and sickle. The peasants had been released from feudal bondage, but much of their technique of agriculture was still medieval.

The Five-Year Plan held out to the peasantry the prospect of utilising modern agricultural technique. Here a special role was played by the thousands of Machine-and-Tractor Stations, which demonstrated to the peasantry the necessity and economic advisability of changing from petty individual farming to collective

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farming The Five-Year Plan replaced the old bond between the workers and the peasantry by which the harvest was exchanged for town goods (articles or consumption) by a new bond, stronger and more durable, by which the harvest would be exchanged for agricultural means of production. But modern agricultural means of production, tractors, ploughs, and harvesting machines, could only be utilised effectively and to the fullest extent by large-scale agricultural units. This meant the coming together of the peasants in a village, or in a number of villages, into a single economic unit in which the land would be ploughed, sown, and reaped in common, in which the instruments of production—ploughs, draught animals, etc—would be thrown into a common pool.

Lenin had already indicated that, quite apart from the example given by the State farms and by the pioneer collective farms of one variety or another, it would be possible through co-operation, i.e. through the Co-operative Productive Societies of peasants, to build Socialist forms of agriculture. But the substitution for small peasant economy, where each peasant works separately on his dwarf plot of land, tenaciously holding to "his own," of large-scale agricultural economy had never been voluntarily carried through by peasants in the history of the world. The substitution had taken place, but it was not voluntary. In England in the eighteenth century comparatively large-scale farming had been introduced by the expropriation of the peasant holding and the destruction of the peasantry as a class. This path was not open. Naturally, another path had to be found—the path already indicated by Lenin.

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Slowly and gradually, up to 1928, collective farms had been organised here and there. But now, in the Five-Year Plan, the progress quickened, and suddenly, in the years 1929-30, there came a tidal wave of collectivisation sweeping over vast territories of the Soviet Union and embracing, not scores, thousands, or hundreds of thousands, but millions of peasants.

The success of collectivisation in this first Five-Year Plan not only went beyond expectation but in some cases outran discretion. The difficulties caused, which were dealt with by Stalin in his famous article of March 1930, "Dizzy with Success," and other difficulties that accrued, were overcome in the course of the following years. The greatest difficulties came from the resistance of the kulaks, who fought with the desperate resistance of a doomed class. They assassinated Soviet officials, carried on extensive sabotage, and organised local risings—all of it tellingly set forth in Sholokhov's *Virgin Soil*. But the greatest damage the kulaks inflicted on the growing collective farm movement was when they entered the collective farms—leaving behind them their dead cattle. Throughout the Soviet Union the kulaks slaughtered their draught animals and other cattle. The reduction in total livestock was extremely serious. In 1929 there were 34,000,000 horses in the U.S.S.R. By 1933 the number had gone down to 16,600,000.

Such a figure is eloquent of the casualties in the bitter class struggle that carried through collectivisation. The most difficult years of this reorganisation of agriculture were 1931 and 1932, but the struggle as a whole lasted fully five years, up to the end of 1934. The struggle issued in victory. The kulaks, the last capitalist class, were



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routed "The Soviet peasantry," said Joseph Stalin in his report to the Seventeenth Congress of the C P S U. (1934), "have put off from the shores of capitalism for good and are sailing forward in alliance with the working class towards Socialism"

## CHAPTER VI

# SOCIALIST SOCIETY

### I. THE SECOND FIVE-YEAR PLAN

THE SECOND FIVE-YEAR PLAN, begun in 1933, had to achieve results considerably greater than the first Five-Year Plan. But, just because of the success of the first Pyatiletka, the still more remarkable projects of the second Pyatiletka did not encounter the incredulity with which the first had been greeted throughout the world.

The tasks of the second Five-Year Plan were set forth as the building of classless Socialist society, the completion of technical reconstruction throughout the whole of national economy, a still more rapid improvement in the standard of material well-being and culture of the entire Soviet population, with a twofold to threefold increase in consumption per head. In this second plan, the question of quality, mastery of the new technique, was particularly stressed.

Half-way through the second Five-Year Plan there began a movement from below which changed the situation and enormously accelerated the speed of Socialist construction. This was the famous Stakhanovite movement. Stakhanov was a miner who in one shift, on August 30th, 1935, performed many times the usual quota of work. This was achieved by careful planning of

## SOCIALIST SOCIETY

work and division of labour His example was imitated It spread to hundreds, to thousands, and then to scores of thousands By mid-November 1935 there was held the First All-Union Conference of Stakhanovites, at which Stalin pointed out that Stakhanovism enabled them to catch sight of the horizon of Communism, that higher stage of development beyond the classless Socialist society. It meant that the prospect was now being opened of the cultural and technical level of the working class becoming so high as to eliminate the distinction, still existing under Socialism, between mental and manual labour There was now in view a productive capacity at least as far beyond capitalism as capitalist productive capacity had exceeded that of feudalism, a prospect of such an abundance of articles of consumption that society, in the phrase of Marx, would be able to inscribe on its banners the slogan. "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs."

Not only was there no longer any doubt that the second Five-Year Plan would be fulfilled, but the Stakhanov movement made it clear that it would be considerably over-fulfilled Indeed, before the end of 1936 a whole number of branches of industry had already fulfilled their Five-Year Plan By the end of March 1937, in the whole of industry and on the railways, the second Five-Year Plan had been fulfilled.

The second Pyatiletka encountered no difficulties in the shape of any open grouping within the Party opposing the Plan in general or in detail. But there were other difficulties originating outside the Soviet Union. The first month of the second Pyatiletka was the month in which Hitler became Chancellor of Germany. The first

## SOCIALIST SOCIETY

year of the second Pyatiletka witnessed the burning of the Reichstag, the epic struggle of the Bulgarian Communist, George Dimitrov, in the frame-up trial at Leipzig, the withdrawal of Japan from the League of Nations. Thus the second Five-Year Plan coincided with the development of Fascism, with the rapidly increasing danger of war, and finally with the Japanese-German-Italian "Anti-Communist Treaty" of November 1936, directed mainly against the U.S.S.R.

This demanded an enormous increase in the defensive capacity of the Soviet Union. Accordingly, at the beginning of 1936, the numerical strength of the Red Army was raised to 1,400,000, while, at the end of that year, a separate defence industry was established under a People's Commissar.

The anti-Soviet war preparations of Japan, Germany, and their allies, which rendered necessary additional measures of Soviet defence, were not, of course, restricted within the German and Japanese borders. Espionage, wrecking, and terror in the shape of individual assassination, methods familiarly used both by the Japanese militarists and by the German Fascists, began to be employed within the Soviet borders. To some extent Japanese and German spies and secret-service agents were employed for these purposes. But, linked up with these as part of the general wrecking, espionage, and assassination agency, the Fascist Powers were able to use a number of Trotskyists, some of whom, like Trotsky, resided abroad, while others were in the Soviet Union. These men proved willing to turn traitor to their country and to the cause of Socialism.

In December 1934 one of the groups carried through

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the assassination of Sergei Mironovich Kirov, a member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. Subsequent investigations revealed that behind the first group of assassins was a second group, an organisation of Trotskyists headed by Zinoviev and Kamenev. Further investigations brought to light definite counter-revolutionary activities of the Rights (Bucharin-Rykov organisations) and their joint working with the Trotskyists. The group of fourteen constituting the Trotskyite-Zinovievite Terrorist Centre were brought to trial in Moscow in August 1936, found guilty, and executed. In Siberia a trial, held in November, revealed that the Kemerovo mine had been deliberately wrecked and a number of miners killed by a subordinate group of wreckers and terrorists. A second Moscow trial, held in January 1937, revealed the wider ramifications of the conspiracy. This was the trial of the Parallel Centre, headed by Pyatakov, Radek, Sokolnikov, Serebriakov. The volume of evidence brought forward at this trial was sufficient to convince the most sceptical that these men, in conjunction with Trotsky and with the Fascist Powers, had carried through a series of abominable crimes involving loss of life and wreckage on a very considerable scale. With the exceptions of Radek, Sokolnikov, and two others, to whom lighter sentences were given, these spies and traitors suffered the death penalty. The same fate was meted out to Tukhachevsky and seven other general officers who were tried in June on a charge of treason. In the case of Trotsky the trials showed that opposition to the line of Lenin for fifteen years outside the Bolshevik Party, plus opposition to the line of Lenin inside the Bolshevik Party for ten years, had

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in the last decade reached its finality in the camp of counter-revolution, as ally and tool of Fascism

### 2 THE STALIN CONSTITUTION

It was a remarkable tribute to the solidity, calm, and universal support of the Soviet Government by the masses that, during the very period when those investigations and trials were taking place, leaders of the Soviet people should have been preparing and publishing a draft of a new Constitution, which was to be the most democratic in the world

At the same time as Hitler was denouncing democracy, and, together with Mussolini, had launched a ferocious war of intervention upon the democratically elected Government of Republican Spain, the U S S R was seen by the whole world as foremost champion of democracy against Fascism.

The Constitution was elaborated by a Commission of which Joseph Stalin was Chairman, set up at the Seventh Congress of Soviets in February 1935. On December 5th, 1936 (now a public holiday), the new Constitution was ratified by the Extraordinary Eighth Congress of Soviets of the U S S R.

The Constitution confirms and registers the results already achieved on the eve of the twentieth anniversary of the October Revolution. Its opening articles run thus:

“ Article 1 The Union of Soviet Republics is a Socialist State of workers and peasants

“ Article 2: The political foundation of the U.S.S.R. is the Soviets of Workers' Deputies, which developed

## SOCIALIST SOCIETY

and grew strong as a result of the overthrow of the power of the landlords and capitalists and the winning of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

“ Article 3. All power in the U S S R. belongs to the toilers of town and country as represented by the Soviets of Toilers' Deputies

“ Article 4: The economic foundation of the U S S R is the Socialist system of economy and the Socialist ownership of the implements and means of production firmly established as a result of the liquidation of the capitalist system of economy, the abolition of private property in the implements and means of production, and the abolition of exploitation of man by man ”

Here, then, is closed the last chapter of “ the prehistoric stage of human society ” · pre-history ends and history begins and the famous words of Engels receive their application “ It is only from this point that men, with full consciousness, will fashion their own history, it is only from this point that the social causes set in motion by men will have, predominantly and in constantly increasing measure, the effects willed by men It is humanity's leap from the realm of necessity into the realm of freedom.”

## WHAT TO READ NEXT

THE BEST SOURCE OF INFORMATION about the Russian Revolution is the first-hand information contained in the works of Lenin and Stalin. Lenin's *Selected Works*, in twelve volumes, are now being published by Lawrence & Wishart at 5s. each (with a special Left Book Club edition at 3s. 4d.) Stalin's *Leninism*, published in two volumes by Allen & Unwin, Volume I at 7s. 6d., Volume II at 12s. 6d., has to be supplemented (until the third volume appears) by sundry pamphlets containing writings and speeches from the end of 1931 onwards; a list is obtainable from the Workers' Bookshops, Collett's Bookshops, etc. For a fuller understanding of the Russian Revolution it is indispensable to read Marx and Engels; for which, to begin with, procure the *Handbook of Marxism* (1,088 pp.), edited by Emile Burns, and published by Victor Gollancz Ltd. at 5s., with a special Left Book Club edition at 2s. 6d.; a similar *Handbook of Leninism* is shortly to be published. A *History of the Civil War* is being published this year. Otherwise there is no trustworthy history available in English; for Trotsky's "three-decker" is Trotskyist propaganda in disguise. Pokrovsky's *Short History of Russia* has the defect of stopping after 1905.

Of books written in England, the most authoritative is *Soviet Communism*, by Beatrice and Sidney Webb, written from the Fabian standpoint and now published in a cheap edition for the Left Book Club at 5s.:



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