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# Bolsheviki Power Comes From Masses, Says Louis C. Fraina

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In *The Evening Post* of January 30 [1918], Mr. A.J. Sack lets loose an offensive against the Bolsheviki, consisting of a major and two minor attacks, in this order:

1. A resolution of November 10 [1917] is quoted, issued by the Socialist Revolutionaries, which denounces the Bolshevist "usurpation of power" and declares that the Russian people "have been deceived in the basest, most scoundrellike manner."

2. Mr. Sack declares that "the Party of the Socialist Revolution is the recognized party of the Russian peasantry," and that it will wage "defensive fight" against "the Bolsheviki tyranny."

3. The attitude of the Bolsheviki toward the Constituent Assembly is stigmatized as insincere and undemocratic.

The complete, the final answer to these general charges is the course of events in Russia; and I may be allowed to quote from an interview with F.A. Gaylord, who left Petrograd December 18 [1917], and published in *The Evening Post* on February 5 [1918]:

"There is no doubt that the Bolsheviki now hold control over the greater part of the country and that their power is growing every day.... As for daily life in Russia today I will say that the Bolsheviki are doing much better than the Kerensky government. They do not have the support of the minority intelligent classes, but they are

gradually reducing things to order."

If the Bolsheviki were as undemocratic, as utterly unrepresentative of the mass of the Russian people as Mr. Sack would have one believe, they could never have accomplished these things.

## **Soviets Approve Bolsheviki.**

It is a peculiar usurpation of power which is immediately ratified by the All-Russian Congress of Councils [Soviets] of Workmen's and Soldiers' Delegates, as admitted by the Socialist Revolutionary statement. The fact that certain representatives in the Congress withdrew does not vitiate the ratification, as they constituted a small minority of obstinate moderates. This "usurpation of power," again, was overwhelmingly ratified 3 weeks ago by another All-Russian Congress of Councils, which equally ratified the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly. And the Councils in Russia today represent the active force of the revolution, express the aspirations of the great mass of workers and peasants, and possesses the only power capable of reconstructing the economic and social life.

"They have promised you bread, but there will be no bread," says the statement. This is a pitiable perversion of logic. There was no bread because of the counterrevolutionary character of the Kerensky regime, because of agricultural dis-

order caused by the government's failure to distribute the lands and organize production. One of the immediate demands of the Bolsheviki was the seizure of the lands by the peasants, not only to guarantee their being distributed, but that agricultural production might become normalized and systematized, and thereby prevent starvation. As long as the question of land distribution was unsettled, agricultural anarchy would prevail and Russia would march straight into a ghastly famine.

Similarly with the statement that "the Bolsheviki are leading you to the point where the mills and factories will close down, and unemployment, starvation, and death will follow." This was precisely the situation under the Kerensky regime. Whole regiments of employers closed down their mills and factories, first, as a protest against the heavy taxes imposed by the government, and, second, as a means of starving the workers and using the knout of dire necessity to compel them to submission.

### **Industries Now Nationalized.**

In fact, in scores of cities, prior to the November revolution, the workers and the local councils were compelled to seize the factories, dispossess the owners, and in conjunction with the technical staffs resume production. Today mills and factories are nationalized in the central government, and production is carried on by the workers organized as producers.

Mr. Sack's declaration that the Socialist Revolutionaries will wage the "decisive fight" against "the Bolsheviki tyranny" is suggestively reminiscent of another declaration he made some months ago in which General Kaledin and the Cossacks were to become the saviors of the Russian Revolution! Today the Cossacks are hardly a menace. Their reactionary generals have been dispersed by force; and, moreover, the Cossacks are no longer one reactionary mass, the Bolsheviki having orga-

nized the non-propertied Cossacks into councils to carry on the class struggle against the propertied Cossacks.

The majority of the Cossacks, the non-propertied mass, are realizing that their interests are identical with the non-propertied workers and peasants of all Russia, and this is precisely the situation that prevails in Finland and the Ukraine, where the non-propertied workers and peasants are carrying on a class struggle against their bourgeois parliaments, aided and abetted by the Bolsheviki.

The contention of Mr. Sack that the Socialist Revolutionary majority in the Constituent Assembly represented the Russian peasantry may be disposed of in a number of ways.

A few weeks before the assembly convened, a Congress of Peasants' Councils was held in Petrograd; there was a split, the Left Wing having a slight majority, and being, in the naive words of one newspaper correspondent, "mere tools in the hands of the Bolsheviki." Under date of January 28 [1918], Mr. Arthur Ransome cables that "the peasants' assembly, in spite of the prognostications of the anti-Bolsheviki, has an overwhelming majority and supports the actions of the Workmen's and Soldiers' Councils in sweeping away the Constituent Assembly." Which is more representative — a statement issued by disgruntled Socialist Revolutionaries 3 months ago, or the approval of 1 week ago by the Peasants' Assembly of the government of the People's Commissars?

It is simply not true that the Party of Socialist Revolutionaries, as such, is the party of the Russian peasantry as a whole. Historically, it is the party of the middle class peasants, whose bourgeois ideology and interests dictate a "distribution" of the land along the old lines of capitalistic private property and accumulation. The great mass of the peasantry consists of men with a small patch of land and agricultural laborers without any land at all. This peasantry accepts the Bolshevik program of nationalization of the land, and have been

organized by the Bolsheviki in accord with the revolution of the workers against the bourgeois propertied classes, industrial and agrarian.

The Bolsheviki realized that their cause was hopeless without a revolutionary peasantry; and they have secured, temporarily at least, this revolutionary peasant ally through the process of intensifying and clarifying the agrarian class struggle.

### **The Constituent Assembly.**

The dissolution of the Constituent Assembly was neither unjust nor undemocratic. It was a necessary and a revolutionary act. Mr. Sack is wrong in saying that the Bolsheviki did not keep their promises — they did allow the Constituent Assembly to meet. They never promised not to dissolve it. This may appear as casuistry but revolutions do not stand still. A demand at one stage of the revolution may become superfluous in a

subsequent stage. One of the demands of the Bolsheviki prior to the November revolution was the immediate convocation of the Constituent Assembly, which the governments of Miliukov and of Kerensky kept postponing. But after the November revolution it was no longer necessary, the task of organizing a revolutionary government and of proceeding to reorganize industry and agriculture had been accomplished. As one correspondent phrased it, “The Constituent Assembly was a legacy bequeathed to the Bolsheviki by a revolution not their own.” Elected from the old election lists, the Constituent Assembly was bound to become the authority of the bourgeois republic, that republic against which the revolution of November was directed. The Assembly did not represent the facts of the new situation; hence it became counterrevolutionary and necessarily had to be dissolved.

*Edited by Tim Davenport.*

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