The Situation in Russia

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THE information that comes from Russia is usually confused and contradictory, and the most important is suppressed. On July 3 an All-Russian Congress of Soviets convened, was in session more than a week, but scarcely any news was allowed to come here of the sessions, except one or two unimportant items. This suppression of Russian news by the newspaper hirelings of imperialism is eloquent in itself. It proves conclusively that the Soviets are in undisputed control of Russia; that they are proceeding satisfactorily with the reconstruction of the country, otherwise the papers would teem with news to the contrary; and the suppression of news concerning the recent All-Russian Congress is very satisfactory as showing that the Bolsheviki are still directing the destiny of revolutionary Russia, otherwise the press would have screamed in big, black-face type, "Pro-German Bolsheviki Overthrown."

This is, indeed, the salient feature in the Russian situation: the undisputed supremacy of the Soviets. Counter-revolutionary plots, some of them engineered by the infamous traitors among the moderate Socialists, have been swiftly crushed and caused scarcely a ripple upon the surface of things. The eighth or tenth "Provisional Siberian Government" has been organized, and yet the Russian masses do not rally to its support. Nine months of the "dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry" has proven the will of the Russian masses, the supremacy of the Soviets. The Soviets will not be overthrown except at the point of foreign bayonets, by the combined invasion of Austro-German and Japanese-Entente troops. For it is certain that an invasion of Siberia by Japanese troops, miserably camouflaged as "assisting Russia," would be the signal for a new German invasion of European Russia; and each imperialistic government would "justify" itself by the action of the other.

It would be a waste of time to characterize the infamous charges concerning the "pro-Germanism" of the Bolsheviki. The acceptance of the brutal peace terms of Germany was an expression of realistic policy, a necessity imposed upon the Soviets by the disorganization of the economic life of the country and of the army—a disorganization started under Czarism and completed by the various coalition governments. Revolutionary Russia accepted this peace temporarily, to prepare its material and psychological forces to renew the struggle against German Imperialism—against all Imperialism. Today, one of the tasks of the Council of People's Commissaries is the organization of a new revolutionary army; as Trotzky phrased it in urging conscription, only an adequate army can save revolutionary Russia considering the prevailing international situation. Conscription was adopted by the Soviets; and soon revolutionary Russia will have its own army as an instrument of revolutionary proletarian policy. Should the Soviets retain power and not be overthrown by foreign intervention, and should peace, as is likely, not be concluded within a year or two, revolutionary Russia will re-enter the war against Germany in order to enforce *real* self-determination in the provinces brutally annexed by Germany and Austria. Provided with the means, revolutionary Russia will fight; but it will be its own separate war, a revolutionary war waged for revolutionary purposes. This war might conceivably contribute to the development of revolution in Germany, in which event Russia's war against Germany would immediately cease, and the revolutionary proletariat of both nations unite to fight *all* Imperialism and for the international Social Revolution. Revolutionary Socialism recognizes one struggle alone—the class struggle; and revolutionary Socialism wages the class struggle under any and all conditions, even should it become a test of military power in the form of a revolutionary war.

The longer the war lasts, the more intense becomes the struggle, the better the prospects of the Russian Revolution, since neither group of imperialistic belligerents can do all that they otherwise would do to crush the Revolution. It is in the interest of international Imperialism to crush the proletarian Revolution in Russia, and it is in spite of itself that Imperialism assists the Revolution by prolonging the war. This circumstance has developed pro-war sentiments among some American Socialists. But the problem is a much more fundamental one. Objectively, the war assists the Revolution by giving it a respite; but this respite is naturally only temporary, since once the war ends international Imperialism will unite to crush the proletarian revolution; subjectively, the only force that can assist the proletarian revolution in Russia is the class-consciousness and action of the proletariat in all belligerent nations. It is the supreme task of the Socialist to develop this class consciousness and action. The prevailing international situation emphasizes the necessity of adhering to our fundamental principles of revolutionary Socialism—the uncompromising policy of the class struggle.

In Russia itself, the Soviets are destroying the political power of the capitalist class and taking resolute steps toward the gradual introduction of Socialism. Socialism is not as yet established, Russia now being in the transition period from Capitalism to Socialism, a period characterized by the dictatorship of the proletariat—as projected by the genius of Marx.

The old state, equally the bourgeois parliamentary state and the Czarist state, has been completely overthrown, with all its machinery of repression, its bureaucracy, and its anti-proletarian character. The new state recognizes only the workers and the peasants as its constituents; as the old state was an instrument for the coercion of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie, so the new state is an instrument for the coercion of the bourgeoisie by the proletariat—with this difference: that where the old state considered itself as sacrosanct and eternal, the new state considers itself a temporary necessity that will gradually become superfluous in the measure that the process of reconstruction emerges definitely into the Socialist communist society of the organized producers.

As an historical category, the Soviets are not a peculiar Russian product, but class organizations characteristic of the proletarian revolution. They constitute a dictatorship in relation to the bourgeoisie, but a democracy in relation to the workers and peasants—the *real* democracy of Socialism.

The representatives to the Soviets are elected directly by the workers and peasants, on the basis of male and female suffrage. The Soviet is the local organ of authority, supervising the industrial and social activity of the people. The division of functions into legislative and executive, characteristic of the parliamentary system and a means of thwarting the will of the people, is abolished: legislative and executive functions are combined into one body, the people itself acts—as in the Paris Commune. The local Soviets elect delegates to an All-Russian Congress of Soviets, which meets every three months in Moscow, and constitutes the supreme authority in Russia. This Congress elects the members of the Council of People's Commisaires and a Central Executive Committee which sits permanently during the period intervening between sessions of the All-Russian Soviet Congress and renders full reports, and if satisfacory they are continued in power; if not, they are dismissed. Election of delegates to the All-Russian Congress and to the Central Executive Committee are on the basis of *proportional representation*: and this fact is eloquent of the infamy of the moderate Socialists who intrigue and plot against the Soviet government, since they have equal rights with the Bolsheviki to acquire control; and if they are in a pitiful minority, it is because the revolutionary masses reject their policy.

The peasantry has, at least for the present, accepted the tutelage of the revolutionary proletariat, the Social-Revolutionary party having split into two factions, the great majority, the Social-Revolutionists of the left, accepting the program of the Bolsheviki. Private ownership of land has been abolished, the land being nationalized and distributed to the peasants with provision for periodical re-distribution. Local land committees take charge of production and distribution, inventory the land in a particular district, allot land to the villages, regulate agricultural labor, control forests, etc., and receive the rental for the use of the land, which is turned over to the national govern-

Workers' Control of Industry in Russia

[*On November 27, 1917, the Soviet government issued a decree establishing organs for the workers's control of factories. The decree published below was supplemented, on December 18, 1917, by a decree establishing a Council of National Economy, constituted of representatives from the All-Russian Workmen's Council of Control, from each commissariat, from trades unions, etc. The Council of National Economy unifies and directs the regulation of economic activity and state finances, and has the authority to confiscate, requisition, sequestrate and syndicate any industrial establishment. The Council of National Economy is divided into several sections, each of which deals with a separate phase of economy. All bills proposed by this council are submitted to the Council of People's Commissaires.*]

(1) In order to put the economic life of the country on an orderly basis, control by the workers is instituted over all industrial, commercial, and agricultural undertakings and societies; and those connected with banking and transport, as well as over productive co-operative societies which employ labor or put out work to be done at home or in connection with the production, purchase, and sale of commodities and of raw materials, and with conservation of such commodities as well as regards the financial aspect of such undertakings.

(2) Control is exercised by all the workers of a given enterprise through the medium of their elected organs, such as factories and works committees, councils of workmen's delegates, etc., such organs equally comprising representatives of the employes and of the technical staff.

(3) In each important industrial town, province, or district, is set up a local workmen's council of control, which, being the organ of the soldiers,' workmen's and peasants' council, will comprise the representatives of the labor unions, workmen's committees, and of any other factories, as well as of workmen's co-operative societies.

(4) Until such time as workmen's councils of control hold a congress, the All-Russian Workmen's Council of Control is to be set up in Petrograd, on which will sit representatives of the following organizations. Five delegates of the E. C. [executive committee] of the Council (Soviet) of Workmen's and Soldiers' delegates of Russia; five delegates of the E. C. of the Peasants' Council of Russia; five delegates of the Labor Unions of Russia; two delegates of the Central Committee of the Workingmen's Co-operative Societies of Russia; five delegates of the Factory and Works Committee of Russia; five delegates of the Engineers' and Technical Agents' Union of Russia; two delegates of the Agrarian Union of Russia; one delegate from each Workmen's Union in Russia having not less than 100,000 members, two delegates from any union having a membership of over 100,000, two delegates from the E. C. of the Labor Unions.

(5) Side by side with the Workmen's Supreme Council of Control are set up committees of inspection comprising technical specialists, accountants, etc. These committees, both on their own initiative or at the request of local workmen's organs of control, proceed to a given locality to study the financial and technical side of any enterprise.

(6) The Workmen's Organs of Control have the right to supervise production, to fix a minimum wage in any undertaking, and to take steps to fix the prices at which manufactured articles are to be sold.

(7) The Workmen's Organs of Control have the right to control all correspondence passing in connection with the business of an undertaking being held responsible before a court of justice for diverting their correspondence. Commercial secrets are abolished. The owners are called upon to produce to the Workmen's Organs of Control all books and moneys in hand, both relating to the current year and to any previous transactions.

(8) The decisions of the Workmen's Organs of Control are binding upon the owners of undertakings, and can not be nullified save by the decision of a Workmen's Superior Organ of Control.

(9) Three days are given to the owners, or the administrators of a business, to appeal to a Workmen's Superior Court of Control against the decisions filed by any of the lower organs of Workmen's Control.

(10) In all undertakings, the owners and the representatives of workmen and of employes delegated to exercise control on behalf of the workmen, are responsible to the Government for the maintenance of strict order and discipline, and for the conservation of property (goods). Those guilty of misappropriating materials and products, of not keeping books properly, and of similar offences, are liable to prosecution.

(11) Workmen's District Councils of Control settle all disputes and conflicts between the lower Organs of Control, as well as all complaints made by the owners of undertakings, taking into consideration any peculiar conditions under which production is carried on, and local conditions. They will issue instructions within the limits prescribed by the All-Russian Workmen's Council of Control and supervise the activities of the lower organs of control.

(12) The All-Russian Workmen's Council of Control shall work out a general plan for control to be exercised by the workmen, and to issue instructions and regulations, and to systematize the reports of the various Workmen's Councils of Control; and constitute the supreme authority for dealing with all matters connected with the control exercised by workmen.

(13) The All-Russian Workmen's Council of Conrol co-ordinates the activities of the Workmen's Organs of Control and of those institutions which direct the organization of the economic life of the country.

A regulation concerning the relations between the All-Russian Workmen's Council of Control and the other institutions which organize and put in order the economic life of the country will be issued later.

(14) All laws and circulars which impede the proper working of the factory, works, and other committees, and that of workmen's and employes' councils, are abrogated.

ment. The land committees of the rural districts are unified into the county committee, which in turn elects delegates to a provincial committee, the provincial land committees being centralized into the Main Land Committee acting for all Russia. On this central body are represented the All-Russian Congress of Soviets of Peasants and Workers, the Commissaire of Agriculture, etc. The abolition of private ownership in land includes city real estate and buildings, land and buildings being declared public property.

It will be observed that this elaborate machinery for the management of agriculture starts at the bottom, and not at the top. It is the same with the workers' control of industry. The state expresses the activity of the organized producers, and not the producers the will of the state. As a reading of the decree establishing workers' control of industry will show, industry has not been completely socialized; the employer, or the owner, is still retained as a director, but his rights*as owner are* obrogated. This control of industry starts with the local workers, and gradually it should transform itself into the unification of all the separate parts of a particular industry into one industrial department, as provided in the theory of industrial unionism, and the unification of these separate industrial departments into one industrial centralized administration.

A particularly important measure was the nationalization of the banks, which destroys the potential power of finance to control indusry. By means of nationalization, the banks become exclusively a means for the development of industry, and not dominantly a means of exploitation as under the bourgeois regime. One of the first measures of the proletarian revolution must necessarily be the destruction of the power of monopolistic finance by means of the nationalization of the banks.

Systematic and intensive measures of labor legislation are introduced, measures directed to the improvement of the workers' status at the expense of the "owners" of industry.

This is a rough sketch of the measures of reconstruction introduced by the Soviets. The great problem is the reorganization of industry, the rapid and intensive increase of production. This great problem is made exceptionally difficult by the sabotage of the bourgeoisie and the moderate Socialists, who do all in their power to disrupt the work of the Soviets.. Obviously, the working of this process of reconstruction is not a smooth one, considering the disorganization inherited by the Bolshevist regime and the intense opposition of various elements of the population.

The *petite bourgeois* pedants of Socialism, the characteristic pseudo-Marxists reviled by Marx, piled theory upon history and history upon theory to prove the impossibility of a proletarian revolution in Russia; but life itself and the proletariat achieved the apparently impossible. Russia for nine months has been a proletarian community, a magnificent expression of the Social Revolution. The ultimate fate of this proletarian revolution only the future can reveal. It is a challenge to the proletariat of the world; it is particularly a challenge to the Socialist, since if the proletarian revolution is crushed the bulk of the responsibility will belong to moderate Socialism and in and out of Russia. In the great crisis, a crisis produced by the convulsions of the old society pregnant with the new, moderate Socialism is a conservative and conserving factor in the bourgeois system of things, directly and indirectly an ally of Imperialism and a traitor to the revolution.

The fate of the proletarian revolution in Russia only the future can reveal, truly. But one thing is clear: the proletarian revolution in Russia is the call to the new day; it marks the entry of the international proletariat into the epoch of the final struggle against capitalism—the epoch of the Social Revotion. Marx is the source of Socialist theory; the proletarian revolution in Russia is the source of Socialist practice.

The world is in the agonizing travail of a new birth. Capitalism, the Capitalism of this imperialistic epoch, is in a new stage of its developement—the *final* stage. It is the task of the revolutionary Socialist to work devotedly and unflinchingly for the reconstruction of Socialism as determined by the requirements of the new epoch. By dedicating ourselves to this task, we shall worthly answer the challenge of the proletarian revolution in Russia.