

# RUSSIA AND THE LEAGUE

By LUDWIG LORE

It was an historic moment when on September 18 Foreign Commissioner Maxim Litvinov, Ambassador Vladimir Potemkin and Minister Boris Stein were ceremoniously received as Representatives of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics into the League of Nations. The Soviets had not come to the League as supplicants. Thirty nations—Great Britain, France and Italy among them—had invited proletarian Russia to enter the international association of the world's nations and more than two thirds of the affiliated countries had voted for her admission and had granted the first workers' state a permanent seat in the League of Nations' Council. Switzerland, Portugal and Holland voted against admission and seven other nations, most of them South and Central American, abstained from voting.

It need hardly be emphasized that the admission of the Soviet Union with so large a majority of the world's important nations and with so little difficulty does not indicate a complete change of heart on the part of the capitalist nations of the world on the one hand or of Soviet Russia on the other. It is likely that most of the delegates who had just voted for acceptance of this "enfant terrible" thoroughly agreed with what the old Swiss reactionary Motta said against present-day Russia. The Soviets are convinced today as they were fifteen years ago that the League of Nations was created to serve the interests of capital.

It is the international situation which has brought about a reorientation of the nations of the world. The fact that the three great capitalist powers of Europe were united in the desire to bring about the admission of Russia to the League is the most vital expression conceivable of the changed world situation. France, England and Italy need Russia as a counterweight against National Socialist Germany. The Soviet Union believes she needs the League of Nations to guarantee her security against a war in the Far East or, should this prove impossible in the face of Japan's continued provocation, to protect her against invasion by her European enemies in the rear.

At the moment the great Powers of Europe—France, Italy and Great Britain—are as averse to war as Russia herself. France fears that another World War would deprive her of the fruits of Versailles. The French Republic is therefore unalterably opposed to any revision of the not only unwise but inordinately unjust peace treaties of Versailles, St. Germain and Trianon. Together with the nations of the Little Entente—Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and Rumania—France has much to lose and nothing to gain from a revision of these forced peace treaties. Several years ago upholders of international peace—the Soviets among them—favored a revision of the post-war agreements.

The anything but pacifist imperialist Italy was just as critical, to be sure, but this from purely self-seeking motives, to secure the support of the strongly pro-revisionist Danubian-Balkan states (Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey). But since Hitler's Third Reich has made 'Revisionism' the battle cry of every nationalist imperialist and war-fomentor on the continent, all opponents of war, whether honest or not, find it impossible to support treaty revision.

Obviously it is not mere accident that the two nations which most vigorously support and prepare for war—Germany and Japan—have withdrawn from the League of Nations. Japan, it is true, brooked no interference on the part of the League when she established her claim to Manchuria and won the day. Germany, too, piled up armaments at a rate that violated every precept of the Versailles Treaty without serious interference on the part of the League. But for all that both felt the responsibilities of League membership an irksome

hindrance to their plans for the future and resigned. Nevertheless against their intentions this resignation strengthened rather than weakened the League organization and, by making possible the entry of the Soviet Union, gave a new lease on life to an almost defunct body. It is not at all impossible that these powers will sooner or later apply for re-entry into the League to be able to carry on their subversive activity more effectively there.

From the first days of its existence, the Soviet Union fought the League as an instrument of imperialism, which, moreover, had set itself the aim of destroying Soviet Russia and suppressing the revolutionary labor movement. When Germany prepared to enter the League in 1926 Tschitscherin, then Commissar for Foreign Affairs, moved heaven and earth to prevent it, for Moscow feared that Germany, once it entered the League, would relinquish her friendly relations with the USSR for a west-European orientation that would leave the Soviets completely isolated.

Today Stalin and with him Litvinov, are of exactly the opposite point of view, under exactly opposite conditions, to be sure. But as early as 1927 Stalin expressed the opinion that Germany's entry into the League had given Russia a "friend at court." This proved to be the case when Chamberlain in the winter of 1927 propagated his bloc against the Soviets. It was Stresemann who prevented his British colleague from putting this menacing plan into effect.

But today Germany is THE enemy of the Soviet Union, and will influence Poland and probably Yugoslavia, perhaps also Bulgaria and Rumania to go along. But, although they are all, with the exception of Germany, represented in the League, Russia no longer fears them. Lenin frequently expressed the opinion that proletarian diplomacy must learn to use the disagreements between the various groups of capitalist states to safeguard peace and working class interests. It is a well-known fact that the Allies in 1918, through the American Raymond Robbins, offered arms and assistance to the Soviets to continue the fight against the Central Powers and that both Lenin and Trotsky voted for acceptance. It was Lenin who said at that time that he would accept help against the common enemy "not only from the English-French imperialist robbers, but from the devil himself."

When Litvinov addressed the assembled League representatives the other day he mentioned neither imperialists, robbers nor devils. Soviet diplomats have learned to speak the language of diplomacy with the best of them, often—perhaps too often—to conceal their real opinions. But Litvinov never spoke a truer word than when he said, with all the warmth and conviction of which this very human diplomat is capable, that Russia entered the League of Nations to help and further the struggle for international peace.

Leon Trotsky once said that the Soviets can go side by side with the capitalist world a part of the way. Provided, of course, they do not miss the parting of the ways when that time comes. Nor will many refrain from raising the question whether the Soviet Union would now be entering the League which Lenin denounced as an instrument of imperialism if the policies of the Communist International had not been so disastrous to the revolutionary movement in the leading capitalist nations of Europe and elsewhere.

LEXINGTON, N. C.—Bill Presswood was elected chairman of the North Carolina Unemployed League in the state convention held in this city. Two hundred delegates were present. The meeting was the liveliest ever to be held since the movement began spreading.

The state League is now on a dues paying basis.