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The Fight for the Existence of the Russian Soviet Republic.

by Karl Radek.

** What is now going on in Genoa is of much more significance than usual treaties of peace. The Entente has set Soviet Russia Versailles conditions. But Genoa is not Versailles. In Versailles bourgeois states, some of which had defeated the others, negotiated with each other. The victors as well as the vanquished were so confined within the limits of capitalism that when the Entente confiscated the German merchant marine or German property in foreign countries it bound Germany to recompense its own citizens. The peace negotiations with Russia are of an entirely different character. Russia has not come to Genoa as a conquered state. On the contrary, the armies of the Entente and the White Guards equipped by it were defeated in the war with Soviet Russia. Therefore the Entente can demand from Russia neither war indemnities nor other demands of military victors. The fight is now going on concerning entirely new questions. It is the fight of the capitalist world with the new Socialist world now arising. The old world, the capitalistic world, is traditional, belongs to the past. Therefore, the demand of the Entente for the restoration of the capitalistic system in Russia is a matter of course. Soviet Russia has expropriated foreign capitalists. Well, when it concludes peace with the capitalist world, what is simpler and juster than for Soviet Russia to retract its confiscations and recompense expropriated foreign capitalists? And none the less, this simple demand—simple from the standpoint of capitalism—means nothing but the demand for the suicide of the Soviet Republic.

The Russian Soviet Republic is the result of the first wave of the world revolution. There where capitalism was the weakest, where the proletariat was comparatively most concentrated and best prepared through its past for its revolutionary role, where the peasantry was made brothers in arms of the proletariat by its especial situation, the first wave of the proletarian revolution broke through the capitalist dam. The first great state led by the vanguard of the working-class, by a proletarian party, arose. And this state sought to rule a great country in the interest of the working-class. Even if the Soviet Republic had not been immediately attacked from all sides by the capitalist states, it would not have been able completely to carry Socialism into effect. In a land where 80% of the population possess small scattered farms, where the capitalist process of the division of labor had not been sufficiently developed, only large industry could be permanently socialized. And even large industry could not be socialized at once. Communism in no way demands so-called immediate socialization, it only demands that the working-class assure itself the possibility of consistent, if gradual socialization by seizing power. When the difference between the Communist and Social Democratic methods of socialization was so represented in Germany in 1919 as if Communism demanded a planless gathering together of the forces of production while the clever Social Democracy aimed to go forward slowly but surely, the experiences of the last three years have demonstrated how nonsensical this statements was. The Social Democracy has worked out learned plans for the gradual socialization of all branches of national industry from coal to midwifery. It only forgot one unimportant thing—to conquer power which would have permitted at least the first step

on the way to socialization! When the Soviet Government carried through socialization in a much faster tempo and on a much larger scale than Russian conditions permitted, that was not the result of a Communist plan but was the attack of the capitalist government which compelled the government to disarm its enemy, the bourgeoisie, with all the forces at its disposal, i. e., to deprive it of all its property, and secondly to collect all this property in the hands of the state which permitted of the defense of the country. This same situation compelled the introduction of the system of requisitions, that is, the seizure of the grain necessary for carrying on the war, for which the peasants could not be given any industrial products in exchange because the entire industrial apparatus was only producing for war needs. After the defeat of the capitalist offensive against Soviet Russia the Soviet Government could and had to renounce this system which was only one of military necessity and contradicted the given conditions of Russian economy. The Soviet Government returned to the peasants control over their grain, that is it reestablished petty bourgeois economy for 80% of the population. It removed restrictions upon small industry and the artisans, for it is evident that these scattered shops could not be socialized and that it would be unreasonable, in view of the general shortage of industrial goods, to deprive them of the possibility of producing for the peasantry. The Soviet Government holds to the fundamental principle of nationalization—large industry is to belong to the state which is in the hands of the proletariat. The Soviet Government can attempt to manage and exploit this industry in the interest of the proletariat in various ways. It can do this directly; it can do this by leasing the factories and setting the percentage of the profit which it claims as well as the conditions of labor in the concession agreements. These two forms of management are different in more than one way. In the first case the direction of industry lies directly in the hands of the proletarian state, that is, of the workers' organisations and their experts. The entire profit goes to the proletarian state. In the second case the private capitalists manage industry. They obtain the profit and only pay the proletarian state the shilling of rent. But in both cases the proletarian state is in the last analysis the owner; in both cases it has the levers for the control of national economy in its hands. And after the removal of the necessity for the importation of industrial products from foreign capitalists in order to raise the production of the Soviet Republic, the Soviet Government can gradually attempt to obtain control of the entire field of large industry. The fight for the maintenance of the position of the Soviet Republic. It is a fight for the conquests that differentiate the Russian October Revolution from all revolutions hitherto. All previous revolutions were bourgeois revolutions because they made the bourgeois the ruling power in all spheres of economic life. The Russian Soviet Republic can make concessions to the bourgeoisie in different fields as long as the European working class does not free it from the pressure of world capital. But these concessions can only go to the limit marked by the nationalization of large industry. And therefore the Soviet Republic can be beaten in this position but it must not evacuate it.

Therefore we call the struggle now going on in Genoa a decisive struggle—a struggle for the existence of the Soviet Republic.

All other questions are questions of expediency. There is no principle which forbids a recognition of debts. The debt question is the question of the possibility of their repayment. Therefore the Russian delegation in Genoa very realistically declared, "Reduce our debts to the point where we can pay them! Help us with credits during the difficult year of the transition from war to peace, from destruction to productive labor! And we will recognize the debts."

In the question of compensation for nationalization, everyone who knows Marxist literature knows that Marxism never rejected compensation as a matter of principle. If the proletariat can avoid a civil war with all its horrible consequences, with the destruction of national economy which is an unavoidable result of the civil war, by paying compensation, it would be idiotic to prefer civil war. But as long as a class is not defeated, it fights for its power and refuses to pay compensation. The Entente can now bring up the question of recompensation only because the Russian working class was strong enough to defeat the Russian bourgeoisie but was not strong enough to defeat the bourgeoisie all over the world. The Russian bourgeoisie can curse the Soviet Republic daily, but that won't turn a single hair on Lenin's bald head gray. When the Entente demands compensation for the losses of its capitalists, it can, it is true, not support this demand by the force of arms but it can support it by the financial blockade. And therefore the Soviet Government declared, "We are ready to give the former foreign employers preferential rights in concessions but they can only be have the usufruct of their former factories but cannot own them. If they do not want that, we are ready to negotiate as to their compensation, either by the compensation of the former foreign proprietors through the issue of new shares in new great concerns in which the Russian State and foreign capital will participate on equal terms or in the form of money compensation which will be obtained by loans." This question is of the same nature as the question of the debts. It is easy to sign a check for one hundred billion, but it is difficult to pay even one billion in gold. Therefore the English finance specialist, Keynes, who is certainly not a Communist, correctly stated that this attempt to obtain notes with astronomical figures is in-

sanity. At the present it is a question of credits which will then permit the commencement of payment.

The struggle as to the size of the debt and the credits granted will be difficult but the struggle for the retaining of nationalization is much more difficult. And this but the struggle is the new aspect in the Genoa negotiations. The *Kölnische Zeitung* is delighted with the frock coats and top hats of the Russian Soviet Delegation and it wonders that neither Tchitcherin nor the bricklayer Sabronov used the napkins at Lloyd George's table as handkerchiefs. All this nonsense of the insane journalistic prostitutes who believe their own lies and thus are astounded that the representatives of the Soviet Government do not eat little children, does not remove the fact that in Genoa a great struggle will be fought between two classes—between the Russian vanguard of the world proletariat and the capitalist world. The capitalist world is attempting to utilize the period between the first wave of the world revolution and the next to drive the proletariat from the position which it now occupies and which will facilitate its further advance. And the resistance offered by the delegation of the Soviet Government means the holding of a barricade until new reserves come up. The European working class understood, at the time when the roar of cannon was heard in Petrograd and in Orel, that its fate was also being decided in the fight between the Whites and Reds in Russia. Now the cannons roar no longer but diplomats are at breakfast and they lispily exchange friendly words, every second one of which is a lie. Mr. Lloyd George is addressed as Right Honourable by the Soviet Delegation and the Soviet Delegation is treated by Lloyd George as if it consisted of gentlemen according to the ideal of London City. But all that is only the deceiving external picture. All peace conferences up to the present were negotiations between capitalist competitors, struggles between various national cliques of the same class. Now in Genoa the representatives of two classes are negotiating. And these negotiations in the splendid conference chamber in well chosen polite words are no different from a fight with arms in the hand. The duty of every class-conscious worker during these decisive weeks is the rousing of an understanding for all this in the masses of the European proletariat and the mobilisation of these masses for the support of the Russian Soviet delegation.