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A Lesson from Russia

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Since November 7, 1917, innumerable journalists, prostituted to capitalism, have devoted their entire time to denunciation and misrepresentation of the Russian revolution. The columns of the Morganized press fairly reeked with word pictures of the horrors alleged to have been perpetrated upon the Russian masses by the inhuman and blood-thirsty revolutionists.

Time and again the stories of Bolshevik atrocities have been exposed as infamous lies, yet that fact is not of the slightest concern to the yellow press, which brazenly and persistently repeats in both news and editorial columns the exploded lies. Even this anvil chorus is evidently not producing the desired results as the capitalist class has now resorted to whole page advertisements alleged to be comparisons of the conditions of the Russian people with the condition of the American workingman.

The Chicago Daily Journal carries a full page advertisement containing a cartoon under the caption, "Russia Offers a Great Industrial Lesson," wherein is portrayed an American worker, his wife and child, sitting at ease in front of their home; the vines are twining around the door and flowers are nodding upon the curb beyond the sidewalk—a picture of happiness and contentment. In the distance can be seen innumerable industrial establishments with smoke pouring from the stacks, denoting peaceful production.

Then we are revolted at the alleged Russian conditions portrayed below. Instead of peace and contentment there is murder, pillaging, rapine. Hundreds of infuriated beasts are seen plying the torch to industrial establishments; others are assassinating women and children; women are weeping over the bodies of their dead husbands; children are torn from their terrified mothers' breasts and hurled upon the earth run red with human blood. Beneath this picture is the sinister warning: "Let Russia's Plight be a Warning to You." Then follows this screed:

"Torn apart by internal dissention and strife, Russia stands conspicuously before the world, helpless as an orphaned child.

"Deficient in education, lacking leadership in whom her suspecting millions can trust, Russia is a pitiable example of the vicissitudes of war.

"Contrast America's busy factories with the idle workshops of Russia. From the smokestacks of American factories curls the smoke of peace and enterprise, while inside contented laborers are bending happily to their daily task, working shoulder to shoulder with capital.

"The chimneys of Russian workshops are smokeless. Their interiors are desolate. Their walls are crumbling and forbidding, while frenzied mobs burn with torch and wantonly kill.

"Contrast again the lack of government and governmental restraint and encouragement with Bolshevism.

"Contrast the housed American workmen with the homeless hordes of starving Russians.

"The great fundamental principle of American government, which inspires initiative in the individual, has proved to be the sound basis for social, industrial and political freedom and progress.

"It has made the United States the strongest monetary and industrial force in the world.

"On the eve of reconstruction and readjustment we all must do our part in co-operation and conservation, in order to increase production.

"Then the wheels of industry will move faster than ever, without jolt or the slipping of a cog, and Labor and Capital will be content."

The creature who drew that cartoon is so debased he would ravish the body of his own mother at the behest of his masters. Just as there are distances in space which the most powerful telescope cannot penetrate, so are there depths of human depravity which the mind cannot measure.

But as an analysis of the psychology of the creature responsible for that cartoon is impossible, we shall endeavor to analyze the motive that prompted the lie.

The fact that there is a great deal of unrest in the ranks of the workers in America is so well known it needs no com-

ment. Most American workers know only too well from sad experience that the picture of contentment and happiness is a deliberate exaggeration, to say the least.

Let us briefly review the high lights of the industrial conditions in the United States for the past five and a half years. In the winter of 1913-1914 hundreds of thousands of workers were upon the streets idle. Industry was disorganized; the summer of 1914 saw ever larger numbers thrown into the ranks of the unemployed. The conflagration in old Europe came as the savior of capitalist industry in the United States. The sudden demands of the governments of Europe for material—ammunition, food, clothing, etc.—with which to carry on the mass slaughter stimulated American industry to an extent never before known and completely absorbed the army of unemployed.

Establishments that had been used for normal capitalist production were converted into war industries between 1914 and 1917. In fact, the industries of the United States during 1915 and 1916 were just as much a part of the Allied military machine as was the British army. It was clearly apparent that the United States government would be compelled to enter the war on the part of the Allies in order to protect the interests of the ruling class. With the entrance of this country into the war as a military factor industries were stimulated to an extent hardly conceivable a few years before. The selective draft withdrew hundreds of thousands of men from the industries and the demand for labor power was so great that countless thousands of women donned overalls and engaged in branches of industry formerly considered the exclusive sphere of men.

The unemployment problem of 1913-1914 caused numerous reformers, including persons prominent in the so-called Socialist party, to advocate legislative reforms guaranteeing every adult male "the right to work." This utopian idea was not realized at that time as the army of unemployed is inseparable from normal capitalist production; but in 1918 the United States government placed the famous "work or fight" law upon the statute books, granting the utopians their "right to work" with a vengeance. Numerous state legislatures and city councils, with an industrial constituency, went a step further and prescribed long terms of imprisonment for those unable to enter the army and who refused to engage in "essential work." Men were recruited by the tens of thousands from the farms of the Middle West and the rural districts of the East for the war industries. Every arms and ammunition factory, every shipyard operated both day and night; still the demand for materials was not met.

Then on November 11, 1918, came the signing of the armistice and the speedy demobilization of the industrial army. Men were discharged from industries even faster than they were recruited. They are returning to their former pursuits only to find no demand for their labor power.

With the collapse of the war we are again confronted with unemployment. Already the slave market is overcrowded. Thousands upon thousands of idle men crowd the lodging house sections of the cities. The war industries such as the ammunition factories and the gigantic shipyards are working only part time and many of them are standing idle. There is no longer a demand for instruments of death. The workers need food and clothing, but the capitalist owners of industry cannot realize a profit from their toll, so the factories, mills and mines stand idle and the citizens of this glorious nation, which recently made the world safe for democracy, infest the soup houses or stand in bread lines, as they did of yore.

Compare this condition with revolutionary Russia where,

(Continued on page 8)