

# THE LANGUAGE OF BOLSHHEVIK DIPLOMACY

(Note of Soviet Commissar of Foreign Affairs Chicherin to President Woodrow Wilson, transmitted through the Norwegian Attache in Moscow, October 24, 1918).

Mr. President, In your message of January 8th to the Congress of the United States of North America, in the sixth point, you spoke of your profound sympathy for Russia, which was then conducting, single-handed, negotiations with the mighty German imperialism. Your program, you declared, demands the evacuation of all Russian territory and such a settlement of all questions affecting Russia as will secure the best and freest co-operation of the other nations of the world in obtaining for her an unhampered and unembarrassed opportunity for the independent determination of her political development and national policy, and assure her a sincere welcome into the society of free nations under institutions of her own choosing; and, more than a welcome, assistance of every kind that she may need and may herself desire. And you added that "the treatment accorded to Russia by her sister nations in the months to come will be the acid test of their good-will, of their comprehension of her needs as distinguished from their own interests, and of their intelligent and unselfish sympathy."

The desperate struggle which we were waging at Brest-Litovsk against German imperialism apparently only intensified your sympathy

## «Ours Is a People's Government Yours Is Not» - Chicherin to Wilson

For Soviet Russia, for you send greetings to the Congress of the Soviets, which under the threat of a German offensive ratified the Brest peace of violence—greetings and assurance that Soviet Russia might count upon American help.

### Test of American Capitalism's "Good Will"

Six months have passed since then, and the Russian people have had sufficient time to get actual test of your Government's and your Allies' good will, of their comprehension of the needs of the Russian people, of their intelligent unselfish sympathy. This attitude of your Government and of your Allies was shown first of all in the conspiracy which was organized on Russian territory with the financial assistance of your French Allies and with the diplomatic co-operation of your Government as well as the conspiracy of the Czech-Slovaks to whom your Government is furnishing every kind of assistance. For some time attempts had been made to create a pretext for a war between Russia and the United States by spreading false stories to the effect that German war prisoners had seized the Siberian railway, but your own officers, and after them Colonel Robins, the head

of your Red Cross Mission, had been convinced that these allegations were absolutely false. The Czech-Slovak conspiracy was organized under the slogan that unless these misled unfortunate people be protected, they would be surrendered to Germany and Austria; but you may find out, among other things, from the open letter of Captain Sadoul, of the French Military Mission, how unfounded this charge is.

The Czech-Slovaks would have left Russia in the beginning of the year had the French Government provided ships for them. For several months we have waited in vain for your Allies to provide the opportunity for the Czech-Slovaks to leave. Evidently these Governments have very much preferred the presence of the Czech-Slovaks in Russia—the results show for what object—to their departure for France and their participation in the fighting on the French front. The best proof of the real object of the Czech-Slovak rebellion is the fact that although in control of the Siberian railway, the Czech-Slovaks have not taken advantage of this to leave Russia, but by the order of the Entente Governments, whose directions they follow, have remained in Russia to become the

mainstay of the Russian counter-revolution.

### Promises and Performances

Their counter-revolutionary mutiny, which made impossible the transportation of grain and petroleum on the Volga, which cut off the Russian workers and peasants from the Siberian stores of grain and other materials and condemned them to starvation—this was the first experience of the workers and peasants of Russia with your Government and with your Allies after your promises of the beginning of the year. And then came another experience; an attack on North Russia by Allied troops, including American troops, their invasion of Russian territory without any cause and without a declaration of war, the occupation of Russian cities and villages, executions of Soviet officials and other acts of violence against the peaceful population of Russia.

You have promised, Mr. President, to co-operate with Russia in order to obtain for her an unhampered and unembarrassed opportunity for the independent determination of her political development and her national policy. Actually this co-operation took the form of an attempt of the Czech-Slovak troops, and later, in Archangel, Murmansk and the Far East, of your own and your Allies' troops, to force the Russian people to submit to the rule of the oppressing and exploiting classes, whose dominion was overthrown by the workers and peasants of Russia in November, 1917. The revival of the Russian counter-revolution which has already become a corpse, attempts to restore by force its bloody domination over the Russian people—such was the experience of the Russian people, instead of co-operation for the unembarrassed expression of their will which you promised them, Mr. President, in your declarations.

### Wilson's "Assistance" to Russia

You have also, Mr. President, promised to the Russian people to assist them in their struggle for independence. Actually this is what has occurred: While the Russian people were fighting on the South-eastern front against the counter-revolution, which has betrayed them to German imperialism and was threatening their independence, while they were using all their energy to organize the defense of their territory against Germany at their Western frontiers, they were forced to move their troops to the East to oppose the Czech-Slovaks who were bringing them slavery and oppression, and to the North—against your Allies and your troops, which had invaded their territory, and against the counter-revolutionary organized by these troops.

Mr. President, the acid test of the relations between the United States and Russia gave quite different results from those that might have been expected from your message to the Congress. But we have reason not to be altogether dissatisfied with even these results, since the outrages of the counter-revolution in the East and North have shown the workers and peasants of Russia the aims of the Russian counter-revolution, and of its foreign supporters, thereby creating among the Russian people an iron will to defend their liberty and the conquests of the revolution, to defend the land that it has given to the peasants and the factories that it has given to the workers. The fall of Kazan, Symbrysk, Syzran and Samara should make clear to you, Mr. President, what were the consequences for us of the actions which followed your promises of January 8. Our trials helped us to create a strongly united and disciplined Red Army, which is daily growing stronger and more powerful and which is learning to defend the revolution.

### Attitude Toward Socialist Workers

For the coming period this should be our attitude towards socialist and non-party workers. Having taken together with them the initial positions of democratic defense, we must impart to this defense immediately a serious proletarian character. We must firmly say to ourselves, we shall not allow that which occurred in Germany! It is necessary that every class-conscious worker permeate himself through and through with the thought of not allowing Fascism to raise its head. It is necessary systematically and persistently to surround workers homes, publishing houses and clubs with a circle of proletarian guards. It is necessary just as persistently to encircle the hearths of Fascism (newspapers, clubs, Fascist barracks) with a proletarian blockade. We must make fighting agreements with political, trade-union, cultural, sport, cooperative and other working class organizations for common actions for the defense of the institutions of proletarian democracy. The more serious and thoughtful, the less loud and boastful character the work will have, the sooner we will gain the confidence of the proletariat, beginning with the youth, and the surer it will lead to victory.

That is the way I picture the basic characteristics of a truly Marxian policy for the coming period. In different countries of Europe this policy will, of course, assume a different form depending on national circumstances. To follow attentively all the changes in the situation and all the shifts in the consciousness of the masses and to put forth at every new stage slogans flowing from the whole situation—in this consists the task of revolutionary leadership.

—L. TROTSKY.

## «Your Post Is Not Yet Taken by Debs» Said Soviet Commissar to U.S. President

the Councils of Workmen's Peasants, and Red Army Deputies, representing at least eighty per cent of the Russian people. This cannot, Mr. President, be said about your Government. But for the sake of humanity and peace we do not demand as a prerequisite for general peace negotiations that all nations participating in the negotiations shall be represented by Councils of Peoples' Commissars elected at a Congress of Councils of Workmen's, Peasants' and Soldiers' Deputies. We know that this form of Government will soon be the general form, and that a general peace, when nations will no more be threatened with defeat, will leave them free to put an end to the system and the cliques that forced upon mankind this universal slaughter, and which will, in spite of themselves, surely lead the tortured peoples to create Soviet Governments that give exact expression to their will.

Agreeing to participate at present in negotiation with even such governments as do not yet express the will of the people, we would like on our part to find out from you, Mr. President, in detail what is your conception of the League of Nations, which you propose as the crowning work of peace. You demand the independence of Poland, Siberia, Belgium, and freedom for the peoples of Austria-Hungary. You probably mean by this that the masses of the people must everywhere first become the masters of their own fate in order to unite afterward in a league of free nations. But strangely enough, we do not find among your demands the liberation of Ireland, Egypt or the Philippines, and we would be very sorry if these peoples should be denied the opportunity to participate together with us through their freely elected representatives, in the organization of the League of Nations.

### For the Cancellation of War Debts

We would also, Mr. President, very much like to know, before the negotiations, with regard to the formation of a League of Nations, have begun, what is your conception of the solution of many economic questions which are essential for the cause of future peace. You do not mention the war expenditures—this unbearable burden which the masses would have to carry, unless the League of Nations should renounce payments on the loans to the capitalists of all countries. You know as well as we, Mr. President, that this war is the outcome of the policies of all capitalist nations, that the governments of all countries were continually piling up armaments, that the ruling groups of all civilized nations pursued a policy of annexations, and that it would, therefore, be extremely unjust if the masses, having paid for these policies with millions of lives and with economic ruin, should yet pay to those who are really responsible for the war a tribute for their policies which resulted in all these countless miseries. We propose, therefore, Mr. President, the annulment of the war loans as the basis of the League of Nations. As to the restoration of the countries that were laid waste by the war, we believe it is only just that all nations should in this respect aid the unfortunate Belgium, Poland and Sib-

eria; and however poor and ruined Russia seems to be, she is ready on her part to do everything she can to help these victims of the war, and she expects that American capital, which has not at all suffered from this war and has even made many millions in profits out of it, will do its part to help these peoples.

### Aims of the League of Nations

But the League of Nations should not only liquidate the present war, but also make impossible any wars in the future. You must be aware, Mr. President, that the capitalists of your country are planning to apply in the future the same policies of encroachment and of super-profits in China and in Siberia; and that, fearing competition from Japanese capitalists, they are preparing a military force to overcome the resistance which they meet from Japan. You are no doubt aware of similar plans of the capitalists and ruling circles of other countries with regard to other territories and other peoples. Knowing this, you will have to agree with us that the factories, mines and banks must not be left in the hands of private persons, who have always made use of the vast means of production created by the masses of the people to export products and capital to foreign countries in order to reap super-profits in return for the benefits forced on them their struggle for spoils, resulting in imperialistic wars.

### "Expropriate the Capitalists"

We propose, therefore, Mr. President, that the League of Nations be based on the expropriation of the capitalists of all countries. In your country, Mr. President, the banks and the industries are in the hands of such a small group of capitalists that, as your personal friend, Colonel Robins assured us, the arrest of twenty heads of capitalist cliques and the transfer of the control, which by characteristic capitalist methods they have come to possess, into the hands of the masses of the world is all that would be required to destroy the principal source of new wars.

If you will agree to this, Mr. President—if the sources of future wars will thus be destroyed, then there can be no doubt that it would be easy to remove all economic barriers and that all peoples, controlling the means of production, will be vitally interested in exchanging the things they need. It will then be a question of an exchange of products between nations, each of which produces what it can best produce, and the League of Nations will be a league of mutual aid of the toiling masses. It will then be easy to reduce the armed forces to the limit necessary for the maintenance of internal safety.

### Appeal to American Workers

We know very well that the selfish capitalist class will attempt to create this internal menace, just as the Russian landlords and capitalists are now attempting, with the aid of American, English and French armed forces, to take the factories from the workers and the land from the peasants. But, if the American workers, inspired by your idea of a League of Nations, will crush the resistance of the American capitalists as we have crushed the resistance of the Russian capitalists, then neither the German nor any other capitalists will be a serious menace to the victorious working class, and it will then suffice, if every member

of the commonwealth, working six hours in the factory, spends two hours daily for several months in learning the use of arms, so that the whole people will know how to overcome the internal menace.

And so, Mr. President, though we have had experience with your promises, we nevertheless accept as a basis your proposals about peace and about a League of Nations. We have tried to formulate with precision your proposals on the League of Nations in order that the League of Nations should not turn out to be a league of capitalists against the nations. Should you not agree with us, we have no objection to an open discussion of your peace terms, as the first point of your peace program demands. If you will accept our proposals as a basis, we will easily agree on the details.

### "Which Is the Real Possibility?"

But there is another possibility? We have had dealings with the president of the Archangel attack and the Siberian invasion and we have also had dealing with the president of the League of Nations' Peace Program. Is not the first of these—the real president—actually directing the policies of the American capitalist Government? Is not the American Government rather a government of the American corporations, of the American industrial, commercial and railroad trusts, of the American banks—in short, a government of the American capitalists? And is it not possible that the proposals of this government about the creation of a League of Nations will result in new chains for the peoples, in the organization of an international trust for the exploitation of the workers and the suppression of weak nations? In this latter case, Mr. President, you will not be in a position to reply to our questions, and we will say to the workers of all countries: Beware! Millions of your brothers, thrown at each other's throats by the bourgeoisie of all countries, are still perishing on the battle fields, and the capitalist leaders are already trying to come to an understanding for the purpose of suppressing with united forces those that remain alive, when they call to account the criminals who caused the war!

### "Your Post Is Not Yet Taken by Debs."

However, Mr. President, since we do not at all desire to wage war against the United States, even though your government has not yet been replaced by a Council of Peoples' Commissars and your post is not yet taken by Eugene Debs, whom you have imprisoned; since we do not at all desire to wage war against England, even though the Cabinet of Mr. Lloyd George has not yet been replaced by a Council of Peoples' Commissars with Maclean at its head; since we have no desire to wage war against France, even though the capitalist government of Clemenceau has not yet been replaced by a workers' government of Merheim; just as we have concluded peace with the imperialist government of Germany, with Emperor William at its head, from whom you, Mr. President, feel as alien as we, the Workmen's and Peasants' Revolutionary Government, from you—we finally propose to you, Mr. President, that you take up with your Allies the following questions and give us precise and definite replies: Do the governments of the United States, England and France consent to cease demanding the blood of the Russian people until they agree to pay them a ransom such as a man who has been suddenly attacked pays to the one who attacked him? If so, just what tribute do the governments of the United States, England and France demand of the Russian people? Do they demand concessions, that the railways, mines, gold deposits, etc., shall be handed over to them on certain conditions, or do they demand territorial concessions, some part of Siberia or Caucasia, or perhaps the Bismarck Coast?

### "State Your Demands Clearly"

The Russian people, through the people's Red Army, are guarding their territory and are bravely fighting against your invasion and against the attacks of your Allies. But your government and the governments of the other Powers of the Entente, undoubtedly, have well prepared plans, for the sake of which you are shedding the blood of your soldiers. We will expect that you will state your demands clearly and definitely. Should we, however, be disappointed should you fail to reply to our quite definite and precise questions we will draw the only possible conclusion—that we are justified in the assumption that your government and the governments of your Allies desire to get from the Russian people a tribute both in money and in natural resources of Russia, and territorial concessions as well. We will tell this to the Russian people as well as to the toiling masses of other countries, and the absence of a reply from you will serve for us as a silent reply. The Russian people will then understand that the demands of your government and of the governments of your Allies are so severe and vast that you do not even communicate them to the Russian Government.

### CLASSES OF INTERNATIONAL WORKERS SCHOOL

The classes of the Brooklyn branch of the International Workers School will begin Monday, Dec. 4th. Classes will begin at 8:00 P. M. and end at 10. Monday Evenings: History and Program of the Left Opposition—George Ray. History of the Russian Revolution—Sam Gordon. Wednesday Evenings: Fundamentals of Marxism—Joe Carter. Principles of Communism—Max Geltman.

## LEON TROTSKY

# Our Present Tasks

The victory of national-socialism in Germany brought about in other countries not the strengthening of Communist but of democratic tendencies. In an especially clear form we see this in the examples of England and Norway. But the same process is undoubtedly taking place in a series of other countries as well. It is very possible that the social-democracy of Belgium in particular will in the nearest future go through a period of a new political ascent. That reformism is the worst break on historic development and that the social-democracy is doomed to failure—this is ABC to us. But the ABC alone does not suffice. In the general historic decline of reformism just as in the decline of capitalism, periods of temporary rise are inevitable. The candle burns most brightly before it goes out. The formula: either Fascism or Communism is absolutely correct but only in the final historic analysis. The destructive policy of the Comintern supported by the authority of the workers' state has not only compromised revolutionary methods but has also given to the social-democracy, defiled by crimes and treacheries, the opportunity of raising up again over the working class the banner of democracy as the banner of salvation.

### The Workers Dread Fascism

Tens of millions of workers are alarmed to the very depths of their hearts by the danger of Fascism. Hitler showed them again what the destruction of working class organizations and of elementary democratic rights means. The Stalinists kept on asserting for the last couple of years that there is no difference between Fascism and democracy, that Fascism and social-democracy are twins. On the tragic experience of Germany the workers of the whole world convinced themselves of the criminal absurdity of such assertions. Therefore the further decline of the Stalinist parties under conditions exceptionally favorable for the revolutionary wing. Therefore also the desire of the workers to hold on to their mass organizations and to their democratic rights. Thanks to the ten-year criminal policy of the Stalinized Comintern the political problem presents itself to the consciousness of the many-millioned working class masses not in the form of a decisive alternative: the dictatorship of Fascism or the dictatorship of the proletariat, but in a form of a more primitive and vague alternative: Fascism or democracy.

### Take the Situations As It Is

We must take the resultant political situation as it is without creating any illusions. Of course, we remain always true to ourselves and to our banner: always and under all conditions we say openly what we are, what we want and where we are going. But we cannot force our program on the masses mechanically. The experience of the Stalinists on this score is sufficiently eloquent. Instead of coupling their locomotive to the train of the working class and accelerating its movement forward, the Stalinists set their locomotive with a loud whistle towards the train of the proletariat and sometimes even collide with it so that only scrap is left of the small locomotive. The consequences of such policy are evident: in some countries the proletariat has fallen a defenseless victim of Fascism, in others it has been thrown back to the positions of reformism.

### The Struggle for Democratic "Rights"

There can be no thought of course of a serious and prolonged regeneration of reformism. It is really

not a question of reformism in the wide sense of the word but of the instinctive desire of the workers to safeguard their organizations and their "rights". From this purely defensive and purely conservative position the working class can and must in the process of struggle go over to a revolutionary offensive along the whole line. The offensive, in its turn, must make the masses more susceptible to great revolutionary tasks and consequently to our program. But to achieve this we must go through the period opening up before us together with the masses, in their first ranks, without dissolving in them but also without detaching from them.

The Stalinists (and their miserable imitators, the Braudierists) declared democratic slogans under prohibition for all the countries of the world; for India which did not as yet accomplish its liberating national revolution; for Spain where the proletarian vanguard must yet find the ways for transforming the creeping bourgeois reforming into a socialist one; for Germany, where the crushed and atomized proletariat is deprived of all that is achieved during the last century; for Belgium the proletariat of which does not take its eyes off its Eastern borders and, suppressing a deep mistrust, supports the party of democratic "pacifism" (Vanderveelde & Co.). The Stalinists delude the bare renunciation of democratic slogans in a purely abstract way from the general characteristic of our epoch as an epoch of imperialism and of socialist revolution.

### Deepen the Channels of Struggle

Thus presented, the question contains not even a grain of dialectics! Democratic slogans and illusions cannot be abolished by decree. It is necessary that the masses go through them and outlive them in the experience of battles. The task of the proletariat consists in coupling its locomotive to the train at the masses. It is necessary to find the dynamic elements in the present defensive position of the working class; we must make the masses draw conclusions from their own democratic logic, we must widen and deepen the channels of the struggle. And on this road quantity passes over into quality.

### The Bolshevics in 1917

Let us recall once more that in 1917 when the Bolshevics were immeasurably stronger than any one of the present sections of the Comintern they continued to demand the earliest convocation of the Constituent Assembly, the lowering of the voting age, the right of suffrage for soldiers, the election of officials, etc., etc. The main slogan of the Bolshevics "all power to the Soviets" meant from the beginning of April up to September 1917 all power to the social-democracy (Mensheviks and Social-Revolutionaries). When the reformists entered into a governmental coalition with the bourgeoisie, the Bolshevics put forth the slogan "down with the capitalist ministers". This slogan again: workers, force the Mensheviks and Social-Revolutionaries to take the whole power into their hands! The political experience of the only successful proletarian revolution is perverted and falsified by the Stalinists beyond recognition. Our task here also consists in re-establishing the facts and drawing from them the necessary conclusions for the present.

### Our Tasks Today

We, Bolshevics, consider that the real salvation from Fascism and war lies in the revolutionary conquest of power and the establishing of the proletarian dictatorship.

ship. You, socialist workers, do not agree to this road. You hope not only to save what has been gained but also to move forward along the road of democracy. Good! As long as we have not convinced you and attracted you to our side we are ready to follow this road with you to the end. But we demand that you carry on the struggle for democracy not in words but in deeds. Everybody admits—each in his own way—that in the present conditions a "strong government" is necessary. Well then, make your party open up a real struggle for a strong democratic government. For this it is necessary first of all to sweep away all the remnants of the feudal state. It is necessary to give the suffrage to all men and women who reached their 18th birthday, also to the soldiers in the army. Full concentration of legislative and executive power in the hands of one chamber! Let your party open up a serious campaign under these slogans, let it arouse millions of workers, let it conquer power through the drive of the masses. This at any rate would be a serious attempt of struggle against Fascism and war. We, Bolshevics, would retain the right to explain to the workers the insufficiency of democratic slogans; we could not take upon ourselves the political responsibility for the social-democratic government; but we would honestly help you in the struggle for such a government; together with you we would repel all attacks of bourgeois reaction. More than that, we would bind ourselves before you not to undertake any revolutionary actions which go beyond the limits of democracy (real democracy) so long as the majority of the workers has not consciously placed itself on the side of revolutionary dictatorship.

### Attitude Toward Socialist Workers

For the coming period this should be our attitude towards socialist and non-party workers. Having taken together with them the initial positions of democratic defense, we must impart to this defense immediately a serious proletarian character. We must firmly say to ourselves, we shall not allow that which occurred in Germany! It is necessary that every class-conscious worker permeate himself through and through with the thought of not allowing Fascism to raise its head. It is necessary systematically and persistently to surround workers homes, publishing houses and clubs with a circle of proletarian guards. It is necessary just as persistently to encircle the hearths of Fascism (newspapers, clubs, Fascist barracks) with a proletarian blockade. We must make fighting agreements with political, trade-union, cultural, sport, cooperative and other working class organizations for common actions for the defense of the institutions of proletarian democracy. The more serious and thoughtful, the less loud and boastful character the work will have, the sooner we will gain the confidence of the proletariat, beginning with the youth, and the surer it will lead to victory.

That is the way I picture the basic characteristics of a truly Marxian policy for the coming period. In different countries of Europe this policy will, of course, assume a different form depending on national circumstances. To follow attentively all the changes in the situation and all the shifts in the consciousness of the masses and to put forth at every new stage slogans flowing from the whole situation—in this consists the task of revolutionary leadership.

—L. TROTSKY.

## News from Germany

### Little is rising something

... Little is rising something worth while is rising to the top above all the confusion and from under the wreckage of the various groups. The old shop is completely in ruins. Of the Thaelmanists nothing remains and no one wants to hear anything of them. There is some talk about the Neumanists, but no one really knows what they want. They have no people with them. There is however one group that does concern us seriously: that is the group of the conciliators. They have put out a circular in which they play the role of "the old experienced ones" who always said what would happen. In the German question they say almost the same thing essentially as we do aside from several stupidities and slanders. One stupidity: in their opinion it was not the seizure of power that stood on the order of business but the conquest of the majority of the working class; we had proposed opportunistic bloc policies while they had been for the united front with the middle layers of the S. F. G. Above everything of Thermidor without however taking any concrete position. Nothing but platitudes. They issued a thousand copies of this circular. In actuality to be sure, they have only a limited number of solid functionaries around them; they are merely putting themselves at the head of a universal rebellion in order to derail it, in order to hold together the last remnant of Stalinism and to parade as the saviors in step with the straits of the E. C. C. I. march music. In the circular they are very careful to cast all the blame on the shoulders of the Thaelmanists. It does not breathe

### word about the E. C. C. I. or Stalin.

We also hear that Platnitsky has been gathering material zealously, cross-examining all people coming from Germany in preparation for an attack against Heckert.

(In the meantime Platnitsky has given birth to his scheme in the form of a pamphlet "The present situation in Germany" in which he admits several mistakes of the party to be sure, but only so as to emphasize the absolute correctness of its political line and tactics. Thus the crusade against Heckert has come as a sort of a second addition of a Heckert resolution.—Ed.)

That seems to be the hitch. You will be able to judge much better what it means. In general we say, aside from the fundamental policies, that the whole hope placed in the new leadership is a deception, the illusion, because Joseph cannot admit the mistakes in Germany especially if we are to judge from the captivation of Zinoviev. In any case it is only a transitory stage for most of them. Among those members half inclined to think there is a good deal of sympathy for us but a great thirst for material, especially with regard to questions of building further. (Trade Unions). We have won over several very important people from the middle and higher party apparatus.

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