

Why Soviet Russia Made Peace

By N. Lenin

This article, published here for the first time in the United States, either in Russian or English, consists of Lenin's "theses" urging the acceptance of the Brest Litovsk treaty.

1. The present state of the Russian Revolution is such (since all the workers and the great majority of the peasants are in favor of putting all power into the hands of the Soviets, and in favor of the Social Revolution inaugurated by the Soviets) that the success of the Social Revolution in Russia seems to be assured.

2. Meanwhile, the civil war brought about by the desperate resistance of the possessing classes, who are well aware that this is to be the last, the determining conflict for the retention of private ownership of land and of the means of production, has not yet reached its climax. In this conflict the victory of the Soviets is certain, but for some time our intensest efforts will still be required. A period of disorganization is inevitable,—that is the case in all wars, all the more so in a civil war—before the resistance of the bourgeoisie is broken.

3. This resistance takes the form chiefly of passive manifestations, not of a military force: of sabotage, bribery of varants, bribery of agents of the bourgeoisie, who permeate the ranks of the socialists in order to compromise their cause, etc., etc. This resistance is so obstinate and assumes such varying forms, that the conflict must go on for some months, since the victory of Socialism is not possible until all the encumbrances have been removed.

4. Finally, the task of socialist reorganization in Russia is so great and so difficult, both because of the *petit bourgeois* elements who are taking part in the revolution, and because of the unsatisfactory level of the proletariat, that its solution still requires some time.

5. All this means that the success of the Russian Revolution will require, at least for some months, that the Russian Government shall have a free hand, in order to conquer the bourgeoisie in its own country, in order then to undertake the great task of reconstruction.

6. The international policy of the Soviets must be based chiefly on the conditions of the revolution in Russia, for the international situation, in the fourth year is such that in general, it is not possible to fix a time for the overthrow of imperialistic powers (including the German Government). There is no doubt that revolution must and shall break out in Europe. All our hope in a *decisive victory* of Socialism is based on this conviction, on this scientific hypothesis. Our propaganda in general, and that of fraternization in particular, must be deepened and extended. But it would be an error to base the tactics of the socialist government on the probability that the European Revolution, particularly the German, will take place within a few months. As prediction is here absolutely impossible, all efforts in this direction would be a mere gamble.

7. The negotiation of the Brest Litovsk Treaty has now (January 7, 1918) shown that the military party has gained the upper hand in the German Government, and that this party has its own way with the governments of the other countries in the Quadruple Alliance. The military party already has actually sent an ultimatum to Russia, the official form of which we may expect in a few days. This ultimatum means: either the continuation of the war or the conclusion of a peace by annexation, i. e., the Germans will retain all the districts occupied by them, while we must give up the districts occupied by Russian troops, and an indemnity will be imposed upon us (under the guise of a compensation for the maintenance of prisoners) of nearly three milliards, to be paid in a few years.

8. The Russian Government therefore has this pressing problem to solve: Must this annexation-peace be accepted at once, or must the revolutionary war be waged at once? There is no middle path in this question. The solution cannot be postponed, as we have already done all in our power to gain time and draw the thing out.

9. Among the arguments made use of to show that revolutionary warfare must be waged at once, there is, in the first place, the following: an immediate, separate peace, regardless of the intentions of those who conclude it would amount to an agreement with the German imperialists, and therefore, such a peace would be a breach of the principles of international socialism.

This reasoning is all wrong. Workingmen who lose a strike and are compelled to accept conditions favorable to the capitalists and unfavorable to themselves, do not betray Socialism. Only those betray the interests of the proletariat, who betray Socialism, who accept inadmissible conditions.

Those who call the war with Germany a righteous and defensive war are the true betrayers of Socialism, because they are in reality supporting French and English Imperialism and concealing the secret treaties from the people. These, on the other hand, who conceal nothing from the people and make no secret treaties with the capitalists,—they are by no means betraying Socialism when they conclude a peace which is disadvantageous for a weak people and advantageous for the capitalists of one group, at a moment when there is no possibility of continuing to wage war.

10. In the second place, we are reproached with becoming, through the conclusion of a socialistic peace, agents of the German Government against our will, since we are giving to it the possibility of withdrawing troops from our front and are liberating millions of their prisoners of war. But this argument also proves nothing, since a revolutionary war against Germany would make us agents of the Anglo-French Imperialism. The English promised outright to Kry-

lenko, the commander of our army, one hundred roubles a month for each soldier if we should continue to wage war. And even if we should not accept a penny from the Entente, we should yet, as far as the outcome is concerned, have become their agents in holding a portion of the German troops at the front.

On this point: We can free ourselves as little in one case as in the other, entirely from the imperialistic shackles, for that is impossible without the annihilation of world-imperialism. It therefore follows that after the victory of Socialism in one country, these questions must not be decided from the standpoint of a preference for one capitalism, but from that of developing and strengthening under the most favorable conditions the social revolution that has already begun.

In short, our policy must be based, not on a choice between two imperialisms, but on the possibility of strengthening the Socialist revolution, or at least, on the necessity of enabling it to offer resistance until the other countries join the revolutionary movement.

11. It is maintained that the German Socialist minority has asked us to not to yield to German Imperialism. But we do not consider this a good interpretation. We have always fought our own Imperialism, but the overthrow of the Imperialism of one country by means of an alliance with the Imperialism of another is a line of action that we reject both on reasons of principle and because we consider it inadmissible. This argument, therefore, is really only a repetition of the former one. If the international Socialists of Germany should ask us to postpone the conclusion of peace for a time, and should guarantee us the outbreak of the revolution in Germany by a fixed time, we might eventually take the matter under consideration. But the German international Socialists not only do not say this to us, but they actually are saying, formally, "Offer as much resistance as you can, but decide on this point in agreement with the interests of the Russian Revolution, for it is impossible at present to make any definite promises with regard to the German Revolution."

12. It is maintained that we had promised to wage revolutionary warfare and that the conclusion of a separate peace was a betrayal of our own promise. This is not true. We spoke of the necessity of preparing and waging revolutionary warfare in the epoch of Imperialism. We said this in contradiction of the theory of abstract pacifism, the total negation of "national defense," in the epoch of Imperialism and we said this in order to resist the merely physical instincts of some of the soldiers; but we have never assumed the obligation of waging a revolutionary war without for a moment asking ourselves whether it was possible to wage it at a given moment.

And now it is our duty to prepare the revolutionary war. We are keeping this promise, just as we have kept all promises that circumstances have permitted us to keep: we have published the secret treaties, we have offered a righteous peace to all nations, we have drawn out the peace conferences in order to give all the peoples an opportunity to join us. But the question of the present possibility of waging a revolutionary war can be decided only from the standpoint of its material possibility, and from the standpoint of the Russian Revolution that has already begun.

13. Considering the arguments in favor of an immediate revolutionary war, as a whole, it is evident that they constitute a policy that may perhaps be in line with a fine gesture, but they have absolutely no relation with the material and class conditions of the present moment.

14. It is beyond doubt that our army can neither now, nor at any time within the next few weeks or even months, resist or push back the German offensive, in the first place because of the fatigue and exhaustion of most of our soldiers and the total disorganization of the provision supply, in the second place because of the absolute insufficiency of horses which makes defeat for our artillery a certainty, in the third place because it is impossible to defend the Riga coast, thus assuring the enemy of the conquest of the rest of Livland, and facilitating the occupation of Petrograd.

15. Furthermore, there is no doubt that the majority of the peasants in our army would now be in favor of a peace by annexations by the Germans and not a revolutionary war, while the organization of a revolutionary army and the forming of a Red Guard have hardly been begun.

It would be a serious business to wage war against the will of the majority of our soldiers, now that the entire army is demoralized; and it will be many months before a truly proletarian army, socialistic through and through, can be formed.

16. The poorest section of the Russian peasants would be ready to support a revolution headed by the working class, but they are not ready to support a revolutionary war at present. It would be a serious error to overlook this state of things.

17. The question of revolutionary war therefore stands as follows: if revolution should break out in Germany within the next three or four months, the revolutionary war tactic, for immediate action would not be fatal to our Russian Revolution.

If the German Revolution does not take place in a few months, the continuation of the war would have the consequence that still greater defeats would force Russia to accept a still more onerous peace; and peace would not be concluded by a Socialist, but by a mixed government, for example, by a coalition between the adherents of Chernov and of the bourgeois party or something of the sort, for the peasant army, sick and tired of the war would overthrow the Socialist government in a few weeks.

18. Conditions being as indicated above, it is intolerable thus to jeopardize the fate of the Russian Revolution.

19. The German Revolution will absolutely not be made more difficult by the conclusion of a separate peace. It will probably be awakened for a time by chauvinism, but the conditions in Germany will remain very critical. The war with America and England will last long and Imperialism will fully be unmasked completely, on both sides. The example of the Russian Revolution will continue to inspire the peoples of the world, and its influence will be enormous. On the one side will be the bourgeois system and war for conquest waged by two imperialistic groups, on the other peace and the Socialistic Republic.

20. By a separate peace we free ourselves, in so far as present conditions will permit, from the two imperialist coalitions; by taking advantage of their warfare and their mutual enmity preventing them from uniting against us, we shall utilize the time so gained, in order to strengthen the Socialist Republic in Russia.

The reorganization of Russia, based on the dictatorship of the proletariat, the nationalization of banks and of big industry, the exchange of the products of the cities with the cooperatives of small peasants in the country, is economically quite feasible, provided we have a few months to devote energetically to the job. Such an organization will make Socialism unconquerable in Russia, and will provide a permanent basis for the formation of a powerful red army of peasants and workers.

21. A truly socialistic war could not, at this moment, have any other character than that of a war between the socialistic republic and the bourgeois countries, with the distinct object, approved by the red army, of overthrowing the bourgeoisie in the other countries.

But we cannot at present attack this object. In reality we should now fight for Livland and Kurland. No Marxist, no Socialist of any kind, can deny, without contradicting the basic principles of Socialism, that the interests of Socialism transcend the right of self-determination of a nation. Our republic has done and continues to do all in its power to obtain for Finland and for the Ukraine the right to determine their own lot. But, granting that the existence of the Socialist Republic is threatened by the violation of the right of Poland, Lithuania, and Finland to determine their own fate, it is nevertheless self-evident that the interests of the Socialist Republic transcend all other considerations. We are not enthusiastic about the peace based on the liberation of Poland, make German Imperialism stronger as opposed to England, Belgium, Serbia, etc. The peace based on the liberation of Poland, Lithuania, and Kurland would be a patriotic peace from the standpoint of Russia, but it would none the less be a peace with the German annexationists and Imperialists.

The Kaiser, by fleeing like a coward, escapes the fate of the Czar. But German Capitalism will not escape the fate of Capitalism in Russia.

LONDON, November 14.—Throughout Germany the struggle between the moderate and radical Socialists is going on. The Scheidemann Socialists are unequivocally opposed to stirring up class hatred and civil war. But as in Russia under Kerensky the newly-formed Councils of Soldiers, Workmen and Peasants, constituted after the fashion of the Bolsheviki Soviets, are now beginning to clamor for complete authority. All power to the Soviets!—in Germany as in Russia.

Recently, A. Joffe, the Bolshevik Ambassador in Berlin, was expelled from Germany because he was the centre of a revolutionary propaganda against Kaiserism. According to the press, the Bolsheviki are pro-Kaiser; but apparently, this particular Bolshevik was too pro-Kaiser to suit the Kaiser! But now, Kaiserism having collapsed, comrade Joffe is back in Berlin representing the Soviet Republic.

The Council of Workmen and Soldiers in Berlin has sent its fraternal greetings to the Russian Soviets. International proletarian solidarity is becoming a fact!