

Wallings. I believe that almost alone in Russia, perhaps in the whole world, Lenin appreciated the significance and possibilities of the Soviets. It was he who saw what was coming; it was he who first raised the great cry, "All Power to the Soviets." As the Soviet leaders themselves were more and more carried away on the side of apathy, or even opposition to, the will of the masses; as the masses felt themselves more and more abandoned, leaderless—the Bolshevik propaganda made rapid progress among them, culminating in the spontaneous but abortive uprising of July 16-18, which momentarily checked the spread of Bolshevism, but accomplished two other intensely important things: first, it almost wrecked the prestige of the Soviets, and secondly, it forced the moderate Socialists over to the side of the bourgeoisie.

With the Soviets weakened, the Bolsheviks ruined, the bourgeoisie grew suddenly insolent and impatient. The agrarian riots, caused by the Government's refusal to keep its promises about the land question, were suppressed by Cossacks; everywhere the left wing Socialists were imprisoned, or rendered absolutely powerless—even in the Soviets. Almost openly, and with the participation of the Socialists in the Ministry, Kornilov was invited to become a second Napoleon. But the bourgeoisie had not estimated the latent strength of the revolutionary masses, who rose as one man as soon as the issue became clear. And the Kornilov attempt immediately revived the Soviets, those extraordinarily efficient instruments of revolutionary action, and raised the Bolsheviks at one bound into power. It was in September that the Soviets began to change their complexion—over night—first the Petrograd Soviet, then that of Moscow, Kiev, Odessa, followed by the smaller Soviets. At last the masses knew the way they should go, although their course of action was not yet clear.

But the bourgeoisie knew its danger, and determined at one stroke to crush the power of the Soviets forever. The real question in the minds of both sides had become the question of coalition with the bourgeoisie. And in the Democratic Conference, and afterward, in the Pre-parliament, by the best exercise of all the influence they possessed, Kerensky and the Socialists as Ministers won the day for coalition, against the rabidly crystalline opposition of all the masses of Russia. And what of the Soviets? In the Isvestia of September 15th the Central Executive Committee spoke of the Coalition Government as follows:

"At last a truly democratic government, born of the will of all classes of the Russian people, the first rough form of the future liberal parliamentary regime, has been formed. Ahead of us is the Constituent Assembly, which will solve all questions of fundamental law, and whose composition will be essentially democratic. The function of the Soviets is at an end, and the time is approaching when they must retire, with the rest of the revolutionary machinery, from the stage of a free and victorious people, whose weapons shall hereafter be the peaceful ones of political action."

At the opening meeting of the new Council of the Russian Republic, Trotsky rose to his feet on

behalf of the Bolsheviks, and cried, "With this government of the People's Treason we Bolsheviks have nothing to do!" And the Bolsheviks walked out. For them the issue was clear. The All-Russian Soviets had been called to meet in Petrograd in the first week in November, and then it would be seen which was the stronger—the bourgeoisie, intelligentsia and moderate Socialists, or the proletariat.

Nobody doubted that this was war—the final battle for governmental power, which is by far the most important question of revolution. The Central Executive Committee of the Soviets, now allies of the bourgeoisie, tried every possible means to stop the meeting of the All-Russian Soviets—telegraphing their lieutenants all over Russia to hinder the election, declare against the congress, etc. It was at just that time that I had an interview with the secretary of the Central Committee of the Cadet Party. He said:

"Since the Kornilov affair we Cadets don't dare to be very active in public. Moreover, it is not necessary. The Moderate Socialists are doing all the dirty work for us, although too stupid to know it. The bourgeoisie wants everybody to co-operate with it, but it co-operates with nobody."

But, as a matter of fact, the bourgeoisie made the same mistake it had made in the days of Kornilov. Flushed with triumph, it created a sort of parliament (Council of the Republic) which had no power, and an irresponsible Ministry. In this parliament the Cadet members even declared that it was illegal to declare Russia a republic! The destruction of the Soviets, restoration of discipline in the army, protection of private property these were the questions discussed. And to crown all, Terestchenko, Minister of Foreign Affairs, stood in the tribune and enunciated the same policy of war to annihilation which the Russian democracy had so abominably repudiated when the Milyukov ministry fell in May.

From all over Russia the Soviet delegates were gathering. From his hiding place Lenin lifted day after day his voice of brass, crying, "Insurrection! Insurrection!" What followed was the November revolution.

All this seems very far away from the question of the Constituent Assembly, but as a matter of fact the evolution of ideas of government in the minds of both sides hastened by the intense and swift life of the revolution is clearly reflected in their view point concerning the Constituent Assembly.

In all the first six months of the Revolution the bourgeoisie feared a democratically-elected Constituent Assembly, and postponed the date of its opening again and again, while the democracy clung to it as the solution of all difficulties. Finally the clamor grew so great that the bourgeoisie was forced to agree to the opening of the Constituent at the end of November. But as late as September, one of the Cadet leaders said to me,

"If the Constituent shows any Utopian tendencies, we will execute a military coup d'état, surround the hall with soldiers and arrest the delegates. . . ."

On the other hand, all the masses and their organizations were in favor of the Constituent, and as late as the end of October, when Trotsky and the Bolsheviks left the Council of the Repub-

lic, they declared that they withdrew for one reason because the bourgeoisie wanted to wreck the Constituent, and that they, the Bolsheviks, would defend it with their blood.

This apparent inconsistency with their later action in dissolving the assembly is always emphasized by the capitalist press of all countries, which pretends to believe that the Bolsheviks are as tyrannical as all bodies of men who achieve power, and that they dissolved the Constituent simply because it opposed their wishes. But that is not true.

I have said that in leaving the Council of the Republic the masses knew the way they should go, although their course of action was not clear. For example, there was a strong minority opposed to the insurrectionary policy of Lenin, who were only beaten by a few votes when it came to the question of whether or not to make the November revolution. So it was concerning the question of the Constituent. Although after the establishment of the Pre-parliament the masses knew instinctively that for them parliamentary democracy was a mortal enemy, still they had been educated for fifty years to believe that a Russian National Assembly would solve all their problems, just as the French people thought in 1789-92. Lenin, of course, was against the Constituent Assembly from the beginning, but it was not until after the November revolution, when the Soviets finally began to feel the power of the great Russian mass pouring through all the channels of life, that the majority saw the utter futility of a conventional territorial assembly, elected in the very midst of the November revolution, from electoral lists made up so long before that the Social-Revolutionist party was still set down as one party with a single program, although in October it had split into two separate and distinct parties, with two programs.

Before the November revolution the masses had supported the Constituent, and the bourgeoisie had opposed it because it was plain that the majority would be Socialist; after the November revolution, however, the bourgeoisie supported the Constituent, and the masses opposed it because it was plain that the majority would be moderate Socialists, that is to say, anti-Bolshevik.

But the Soviets were better representative bodies than the Constituent; and the leaders of the Soviets knew that the moderate Socialist majority of the Constituent had no real following—that it hung in the air, like Mehmet's coffin. And, indeed, blown upon by the rough breath of the impatient people, the Constituent Assembly vanished like smoke, leaving no trace behind it.

As for the Soviets, when peace has come and the last effort of bourgeois counter-revolution is crushed; when the resistance of the bourgeoisie is finally crushed by the expropriation of all that feeds it; then the political function of the Soviets is largely at an end, and their economic function begins—uniting in themselves the organizations of the workers, the peasants, and leaving to the free urge of life the creative impulses of mankind. Out of these Soviets is coming a new and dreamed-of organization of society; a world in which government consists only in sunniving men with the material for the building of happy cities.

The Angel of Death

THE angel of death whispers no more in the trenches of the Western front. "The war to end war" is over—the war that was to end for ever the shriek of the deadly shrapnel, the zip-p-p of the flesh-tearing bullet, the earth-rending crash of the exploding shell, the wash of the hungry torpedo, the lurch of the stricken ship, the drone of the terror of the skies, the red glare of the bombed village, the thunder of defiant artillery, the shrill whistle of command, the thud of flying feet, the hoarse shout of charging battalions, the cold glint of onrushing bayonets, the dull impact of clashing troops, the hiss of the liquid death, the screams of the mangled dying, the curses and moans of the wounded, the heart sobs of deserted women, the wail of the lonely child. . . .

The lowering clouds of the wintry sky no longer conceal a flock of bombing planes, machine-guns no longer lurk in the bushes, yonder hill no longer marks a field battery, the sunken ditches, "where men dig their graves and call them trenches," are empty—peace walks abroad where death so lately reigned.

But what of the rest of the world? If the angel of

death no longer stalks the fields of Flanders what of the places where men build their prisons and call them factories, dig sepulchres and call them mines? Does the echo of death's whisper not murmur here?

"The war to end war" is over. But away in the ice-locked north of Russia is not the battle line still far flung? Does not the angel of death whisper over the frozen steppes?

The war is over, but the struggle is on. The class struggle—the struggle of the machine and its owners against man, the struggle which must make man the master of the machine or for ever its slave, the grim battle between man and the machine, between life and a living death—is begun and in Russia it flares into open war.

Into the abode of the machine pour the millions of the world each day. And the machine awakes and roars a hungry roar and the millions approach to feed it; millions who must be ever on the alert lest they miscalculate, for miscalculation means death.

A moment of abstraction. . . . A shriek. . . . A mo-

mentary jar in the whirr of the machine. . . . The angel of death whispers. . . . The machine moves on. . .

In Russia man conquered the machine and harnessed it to do his bidding so the owners of the machine rush to its aid and the smoldering struggle bursts into the open flame of war. War to destroy those who have fought not only the war to end war but the war to end the tyranny of the machine. War to destroy those who not only would make "the graves called trenches" useless, but who would also sweep away the prisons called factories, the sepulchres called mines, and in their places raise smiling fields, factories no longer prisons, mines no longer sepulchres. War to destroy those who would take the tyranny called profit out of the machine and make it the servant of man to the end that the angel of death should whisper no more because of the machine and its owner.

Peace reigns in Flanders, the angel of death whispers no more in the trenches of the Western front, but the grim struggle between man and the machine is on—and in Russia the battle line is far flung.