

# The Fundamentals of Bolshevism

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IN considering the greatest of revolutions—the Bolshevik proletarian revolution in Russia—it is appropriate to attempt to give at least a short characterization of Bolshevism, of that political faith—one might say, philosophic conception of the world—which is destined to play a role of the first importance, as recent events in Europe indicate, not only in the Russian, but in the coming world Socialist Revolution.

Brief characterizations, limited to "formulas," which are, perhaps, suited to a text book, are, generally speaking, insufficient, superficial and inexact. But if, in spite of this, we should give such a brief definition of the nature of Bolshevism, we would reduce it, in our opinion, to the following two fundamental characteristic traits: Bolshevism, or to be more exact, the Bolshevik Party, is first of all a party of revolutionary action, a party of dynamic Socialism, if we may express it that way. The direct object, the constant aim of this revolutionary activity of the Bolshevik or Communist Party—the basis equally of its programme and of its tactics, is a revolutionary seizure of power by the proletariat, the realization of the dictatorship of the proletariat, as an inevitable and necessary condition for the accomplishment of the transition from Capitalism to Socialism.

Inflexible, knowing no periods of weakness and no compromise, waging the proletarian class struggle towards the revolutionary seizure of complete governmental power, a class struggle which puts above everything else its final revolutionary aims, and by these measuring all daily activities—such is a brief characterization of what is known as Bolshevik theory, or the Bolshevik Party—the left revolutionary wing of the former Russian Social Democratic Labor Party.

For anyone who is acquainted with the elements of scientific Socialism and the Socialist movement in different countries, there is nothing new or specifically "Russian" in these characteristics. He will recognize in them the familiar features of revolutionary Marxism which has stepped out of the bulky volumes and become realized in life. Bolshevism is revolutionary preaching translated into revolutionary deeds.

At the dawn of the history of the Russian Social Democracy, during the period of its formation into a political party, when it faced organization problems first of all, this revolutionary nature of Bolshevism found its expression in the demand for a strictly centralized organization.

"We are, essentially, a party of revolutionary action, not merely of revolutionary education prepared for many years to come"—this was the reply usually given by the Bolsheviks to the Mensheviks, who were demanding more "democratic" organization. "Our foe, Capitalism, and its chief instrument in its struggle against us—the governmental machine—are powerful just because of their centralism. If we intend to defeat this enemy of ours, if we desire to bring our struggle to a successful revolutionary seizure of the state power, we should be equally centralized, demo-

cratically centralized, and equally united by a common will, which is being changed through democratic discipline into unity of action. The difference is only in the character of that centralism: While capitalist centralism is autocratic, the centralism of the suppression of the will of the majority by a 'united minority,' our organization centralism should be the democratic centralism of a 'united majority.' But we must not sacrifice Socialism, the true democracy of tomorrow; we must not sacrifice the successful struggle for Socialism for the deceptive, painted 'democracy' of today, of our organization."

"We must learn how to combine together the meeting democracy of the toiling masses, full of spring's stormy nature, with iron discipline," says Lenin in his brochure, "The Problems of the Soviet Government." This combination of democracy with centralism, of democracy with iron discipline, is not merely a problem for the proletariat during the period of realization of its dictatorship, but equally a necessary condition of achieving this dictatorship.

"Democratic centralism"—such was the organization "formula" advanced by the Bolsheviks during the period of 1903.

And in this seemingly "insignificant" organization problem, the general revolutionary proletarian nature of Bolshevism expressed itself. The nearsighted philistines, the middle-class ideologists of "small deeds," who because of the trees see not the wood, may assure us that the "original controversy between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks was of an insignificant, certainly not of a fundamental character." . . . A more thoughtful and penetrating thinker will already recognize in this apparently insignificant controversy the embryonic elements of those vital, fundamental differences which now in some countries have already, and in others are about to, split the Socialist parties into two uncompromising camps—revolutionary Socialists and the hopeless opportunists, the social patriots, social-reformers and all sort of social insipids.

In the "insignificant" slogans of organization advanced by the Bolsheviks as early as 1903, are to be found already the elements of that great slogan, dictatorship of the proletariat, which was introduced by them later in 1905, and, finally, accomplished in the form of the Soviet Government in 1917.

The attitude on this question was characteristic of the two factions of the former Russian Social Democratic Labor Party, the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks, the latter of whom have now finished their circle of development by a union with the Czar's generals and international imperialists.

True to the revolutionary problems of the proletariat, aware of the dynamic role which the proletariat was fated to play in the coming revolution, the Bolsheviks stood for participation in the provisional revolutionary government. And then they advanced their slogan—dictatorship of the

proletariat and the proletarian peasantry.

"It would require gigantic efforts of revolutionary energy in all advanced classes in order to defend the conquests of the revolution," wrote Lenin in the "Vpered" in 1905; and this "defend" is nothing than the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry! The provisional revolutionary government (the government of workers and peasants) was put forward by the Bolsheviks as a means to realize the slogan of "dictatorship" in revolutionary activity. Later this revolutionary government assumed the form of the Soviets.

The Mensheviks at that period would have risen against any such participation in the provisional government, considering that it would be "inadmissible for a party of Social Democrats to commit such vulgarity of a Jaures type;" as regards the revolutionary slogan, "long live the revolutionary government," the organ of the Mensheviks at that time, "Iskra," instructively wrote: the combination of the words "long live" and "government" is a blasphemy.

Only 13 years have passed, and the revolutionary events in Russia give us the opportunity of judging the real counter-revolutionary substance of this fraudulent "uncompromising" of the Mensheviks. The participation of workers and peasants in a revolutionary government they considered as "vulgar Jauresism," but participation in all sorts of counter-revolutionary coalition governments—this . . . they found to be their "sacred duty." A revolutionary coalition of workers and peasants for the purpose of defending a democratic revolution—is "inadmissible," is an "unconscious betrayal of the interests of the proletariat!" But a union with the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie for the purpose of crushing the proletarian government, is . . . "saving the revolution!"

Thus, in the revolutionary stress of events, which has forged into "a steel sword" the true-revolutionary slogans of some, the empty chatter of others has scattered into its counter-revolutionary fragments.

"Give me the fulcrum and I will overturn the whole universe," exclaimed Archimedes once upon a time.

"Give me the proletarian dictatorship and I will overturn the capitalist world, the world of slavery and tears, and on its ruins I will build the glorious commonwealth of freedom and happiness, the Socialist society!"—says now the revolutionary proletariat rallying under the banner of Bolshevism.

From democratic centralism in organization, as a means of promoting the final revolutionary aims of the proletariat, to the dictatorship of the proletariat; from the position of a faction of a "seditional" revolutionary party, to the role of a "governmental party" in the first Socialist republic on earth—such is the course of development, the sweep made by revolutionary Socialism—Bolshevism in Russia.

## The Struggle in Australia

WHILE little is heard from the Commonwealth of the antipodes events are marching with incredible swiftness there. Australia is commonly supposed to be a workingman's paradise owing to the fact that the labor unions virtually control the country, but the Socialistic tendencies of the Australian government exists much more in the imagination than in reality. It is true that the labor unions do control the government to a considerable extent, but, when it is remembered that the present premier is a product of such control, Socialists may well pause to enquire as to the real nature of the labor unions.

The rapprochement between capital and labor in Australia has been found to be the complete failure that marks its advent everywhere. The unions, founded on a craft basis, are the instruments of the workers insofar as they make for shorter hours and what is euphemistically termed a "fair day's wage for a fair day's work," but outside of these and kindred dops the masses of the people in Australia are in the same position as elsewhere. The control of the unions is merely the control that any fairly well organized body of voters exercise over the political state.

It is not surprising that under these conditions the revolutionary section of the working class, in the land of the Kangaroo, have turned their attention more and more to industry and less and less to politics. It was this tendency that resulted in

the heavy sentences imposed on the twelve advocates of industrial unionism some time ago. The Australian arm of the Industrial Workers of the World had for some time previous been very active in their advocacy of the One Big Union, but it was not until they turned their attention to the unions, themselves, and worked within these bodies in favor of the more revolutionary form of unionism that they began to make the weight of their agitation felt. While they constituted a weak minority they were left to carry on their propaganda in comparative peace, but with their rise to power the "labor government" adopted the same attitude that the interests of Capitalism everywhere assume towards those who threaten their safety. The I. W. W. became anathema, the press waged the same campaign of vilification against the organization that it has elsewhere.

But with the jailing of the leaders the propaganda, as has been the case elsewhere, received an impetus instead of a setback, and now comes the report that the majority of the big unions in the state of New South Wales has decided to adopt the industrial form of organization and that the indications are that the unions in Victoria will shortly follow suit. The leaders of the industrialists are frank in their statements that when they have accomplished the industrial form of organization they will then wage war against the capitalist system, or to quote from a newspaper

dispatch "make repeated assaults upon the citadel of Capitalism, choosing our own time and our own battlefields, culminating in one gigantic struggle between the organized forces of capital and labor, when, if successful, we will then be able to take control of industry and establish the Socialist Commonwealth."

At the beginning of the war, in Australia, as was the case in all the countries involved, the Socialist and Labor movements split on the question of war. One section of the party broke away and called itself the National Labor Party. This body fused with the liberals and together they succeeded in riding into office.

But gradually they lost favor. Today the Official Labor Party dominates the field. It is this section, in alliance with the Socialists, who favor the establishment of the One Big Union. Among the "simon pure" political actionists, who have labored so long to unite capital and labor, the New South Wales decision spells disaster as it means relegating politics to a secondary place.

To further quote a news dispatch one of the industrial leaders says: "The political arm of labor must always depend, to be successful at elections, upon the unattached vote of the middleman, the moderates of the community. Therefore the political wing of the movement is in reality governed by the moderates. It cannot march, by the very nature of things, to labor's final goal."