

# Tschitcherin's Report to the Fifth Soviet Congress, July, 1918

Translated from the *De Nieuwe Tijd*, the Dutch left wing Socialist magazine, by B. Auerhaan.

## I

**D**URING the period that followed the signing of the Brest-Litovsk peace, we find that our foreign policy developed along different lines than those followed during the first few months after the October Revolution. (October Revolution according to the Russian calendar, is known as the November Revolution, the proletarian revolution of November 6 and 7, 1917.) The basis of our foreign policy since the end of 1917 and the beginning of 1918 has been a revolutionary offensive.

This policy kept step with an immediately expected World Revolution for which the Russian October Revolution would have been the signal. It was especially meant to reach the revolutionary proletariat of all countries and to arouse them to combat imperialism and the present capitalist system of society. (We remind our readers that at this time until the peace of Brest-Litovsk, not Tschitcherin, but Trotzky, was People's Commissaire for Foreign Affairs.)

After the proletariat of other countries refused their direct support for the destruction of revolutionary Russia, our foreign policy was radically changed through the occupation of Finland, the Ukraine, the Baltic Provinces, Poland, Lithuania and White Russia by the armies of German-Austrian Imperialism. In the last four months (March to June, 1918) we were compelled to make it our object to avoid all the dangers which menaced us from all sides and to gain as much time as possible: in the first place, to assist the growth of the proletarian movements in other countries, and in the second place, to establish more firmly the political and social ideals of the Soviet government amongst the broad masses of the people of Russia and to bring about their united support for the program of the Soviets.

Soviet Russia, with as yet no force sufficient to protect its own boundaries, surrounded by enemies waiting for its downfall, suffering from a period of unbelievable deterioration caused by the war and Czarism, and always cognizant of the dangers which threatened it at every step, had to be constantly vigilant in its foreign policy. The policy of delay was possible thanks to the diversity of interest, not only of both coalitions (the Central Powers and the Allied Powers), but also within each of these groups and in the respective imperialism of all the warring countries. The position on the Western Front (Belgium-France) bound the powers of both coalitions temporarily to such an extent that neither of the two decided to aim at the direct and entire destruction of Russia.

A section of these imperialistic groups in both coalitions thinks of the future, of after the war, of economic relations with Russia, with this world market so especially ripe for development. This element in both coalitions would prefer a compromise instead of an annexation policy for the sake of economic advantages. The hope to embroil Russia in the war, while her army is not built up, plays a part in the calculations of both coalitions. The military party in each group would prefer an attack for the suppression of the Soviet government of Russia.

The Soviet government, although it had decided upon a waiting policy because it did not strive for a war of revenge, was, nevertheless, compelled, after the peace of Brest-Litovsk, to work for armed resistance and at the same time to reckon with those elements who were opposing the war parties. These elements are as yet weak and we are not able to strengthen them through our own military power. The ever-growing proletarian movement has not as yet come to a climax and therefore our report is a grave and serious one. A report about our retreat, about the great sacrifices which we make in order to give Russia an opportunity to get on her feet, to organize her forces and to wait for the moment when the proletariat of other countries will help us to bring the So-

cialist Revolution of October, 1917, to a successful conclusion.

The period following the signing of the Brest-Litovsk peace is characteristic because the German offensive was not marked on the whole Eastern Front by a distinct line. Finland and the Ukraine were free of Soviet troops, but the masses of these parts continued the struggle. The Entente Powers withdrew during this time their entire military support, at the same time remaining as rulers in places from which they should have withdrawn. As a momentary proof that the relations between Russia and the Central Powers was changed to ordinary peaceful relations, we must point to the arrival of Count von Mirbach (who was afterwards assassinated by Russian counter-revolutionists) in Moscow on April 23, 1918, and the arrival of our Russian comrade, Joffe, in Berlin on April 20, 1918.

Concerning the former allies of Russia, we must look upon the landing of Japanese troops in Vladivostok on April 5, which landing was, nevertheless, accompanied by assurances from Japan's allies that this fact was not meant as an attempt to interfere in the internal affairs of Russia. In the meantime a great section of the English and French press was carrying on propaganda for the occupation of Russia under the slogan that such intervention was meant for the saving of Russia. But the government of the Entente Powers adhered to a very careful policy regarding Russia, especially did the government of the United

States of America adopt a decidedly friendly attitude.

The time which now followed was indeed critical with regard to Germany. The German-Finnish and the German-Austrian armies after having occupied the whole of Finland and the Ukraine, invaded the territory of the Soviet government and came face to face with Soviet troops, so that there were continuous skirmishes along the whole line of debarkation and Petrograd was directly menaced. The White Guards (Finnish counter-revolutionists) led by Germans drove into the Murman territory and Port Ino, the key to Petrograd, was in grave danger. At the same time the German army continued its march on the Ukraine front into the governments of Kursk and Woronesj, into the Donetz basin and on to the River Don. In the south the Germans occupied the Crimea and, continuing their march beyond the Don, attacked Batoisk (opposite Rostof in the Don valley, near Azof). Counter-revolutionary bands forced their way into the Don and Kurban districts (the western part of the north Caucasus) under the protection of the Germans.

At last the German troops landed in the vicinity of Porte (harbor in the South Caucasus on the Black Sea) while the Finnish troops on the other side began their march in the Caucasus in the direction of Baku (on the Caspian Sea). This critical period was settled on the Finnish frontier by an agreement between the German and the Russian governments concerning a basis for a treaty between Russia and Finland. A gradual relaxing of military skirmishes on the Ukraine front was directly noticeable, caused by the beginning of peace negotiations in Kiev between Russia and the Hetman government.

The result of our so sharply conducted political dealing was: the retreat of that part of the Russian fleet (the Black Sea fleet) to Sebastopol and from there it sailed to Noworossysk (the harbor of the German menaced Koeban district). The demand for the return of this district was considered as an indispensable condition to territorial, as well as political and economic relations between Soviet Russia and German Ukraine.

Up to this moment (beginning of July, 1918) the most critical question seems to concern the Caucasus and can be attended by grave consequences, also the crisis in the Don, where counter-revolutionary activity is not yet settled. But the retreat of the fleet to Sebastopol made it possible for the mixed commission in Berlin to commence its work. This commission was made up of two parts; one a financial and judicial committee whose work consisted in planning a basis for peaceful economic relations between Russia and Germany; the other, a political committee whose task it was to solve the questions arising out of the Brest-Litovsk treaty.

A new negative moment in the relation between Russia and her former Allies was the uprising of the Czecho-Slovaks. In this case it developed that the governments of the Entente stood with those elements who, like the Czecho-Slovaks, served to support the counter-revolution in Russia.

Directly after these events followed the landing of English troops on the Murman Coast and in the press and the declaration of the diplomats the question of intervention becomes more pronounced. But those elements in the Entente countries whose aim is to reach a complete and friendly relation with Soviet Russia continue their struggle, and reveal at the same time the extraordinary shortsightedness of the policy of attacking Russia. Thus we see how complicated the problems are that the Soviet Commissaires are called upon to solve; we have been careful in our deliberations to avoid all dangers which would lead to irreparable actions from the side of our opponents, and have taken all possible steps to bring about a peaceful solution of our difficulties with both coalitions.

## The Socialism of the Left

*REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALISM.—A study in Socialist Reconstruction. By Louis C. Fraina. The Communist Press, New York. Price 75c, pp. 246.*

This is a very interesting, suggestive and constructive book on present-day international and revolutionary Socialism. The book is the present-day interpretation of what I may call Socialism of the first class, for the Socialist tactics and policies of the Second International are dead and in their places have arisen those of the Third International—the principles and tactics promulgated and applied in Russia by Lenin and Trotzky, with such marked success for over a year. Fraina expounds and analyzes the great historic Marxian Socialism centered in the Bolshevik government of the Russian Soviet Republic, and already spreading like wildfire in Europe and throughout the world.

Socialism expounded in the spirit of fairness and justice, and interpreting the Russian Bolshevik revolution, is of the greatest value just now, for the works on Socialism written before the Bolshevik revolution, and even since then, by those of the "right" and "center" are of practically no value as an interpretation of the present and future International Socialist movement, which is truly Marxian and revolutionary to the core.

The book is the more valuable in that it deals with that stage of development which is now dominant all over the world, namely: Capitalist Imperialism and its relation to the world proletariat.

As an interpretation of the present economic, political, social and international situation, "Revolutionary Socialism" is the best book I have ever read. Peace has at last come to a stricken world. But it is a peace of capitalist governments. The peace of the workers of the world is not yet. Wars between Capitalist imperialist groups will continue. . . .

Our veteran generals have just taken the field of battle for the Social Revolution. Liebknecht, Fritz Adler, Rosa Luxemburg, Lenin, will lead on the fight to the successful conclusion of a Socialist proletarian peace. For this battle Fraina's book is the best and most valuable guide. I hope every true Socialist will read and circulate it widely.

SEN KATAYAMA.