

The Proletarian Revolution in Russia

By Gregory Weinstein

THE first stage of the Russian Revolution opens during the week of March 12, 1917. The second stage—that of a completed proletarian revolution—opens on November 7, 1917. But as the acorn contains in itself the mighty oak, so in March 12 are implicit the events and the conquest of November 7. The Soviet of Workmen's, Soldiers' and Peasants' Delegates in each stage were the determining factor, the force actual and potential of the proletarian revolution and the new communist society.

On November 7, 1917 an event took place in Petrograd which was destined to open the road to a new life for mankind. On that day in the capital of Russia—a state newly delivered from the rule of crowned despots and their favorites—the working class wrested power from the bourgeoisie, who, following the fall of Czarism in March, had taken over the reins of government. This served as a signal for a general uprising of the Russian proletariat and the great mass of the dispossessed peasantry who cast their lot with the industrial proletariat. City after city, province after province rose in revolt, and throughout the whole land the process of removing the bourgeois weeds from the fallowland of proletarianism began. The representatives of the "parliamentary-legal" form of government were forced to vacate under the pressure of the toiling people's masses. And they vacated, although not without a struggle.

The Soviets of Workmen's, Soldiers' and Peasants' Delegates took into their hands the governmental power. The people—the common people—became masters of the situation. The representatives of the working class and poorest peasantry took over the complex governmental machinery in order to utilize it in the interests of those who heretofore had been oppressed, exploited, persecuted and tortured.

This was an expression of revolutionary will and heroism. By a mighty effort of their muscles, similar to that of the Parisian Communards, the Russian proletarians broke the chains with which the ruling class had bound them, and actively began the work of erecting the structure of a new society, a society free from oppression and parasitism. The Paris Commune, crushed by the bayonets of the slaves and hirelings of the cruel French bourgeoisie, has come to life again in the cities and villages of Russia, has come to life in order to live and hold high the revolutionary torch over the blood-soaked earth, lighting the way towards the kingdom of Socialist Brotherhood.

And this torch is still blazing. The Russian bourgeois class have not been able to extinguish it. Prematurely old, too weak for the task, they have crawled to the corners of the earth whence they whine out their slanders and venom at the creators of new life. From behind the bayonets of the invaders summoned to their aid one can see their wolfish forms and hear their howls for vengeance. All their hopes are centered in these bayonets. They are the only salvation; feverishly they cling to them hoping thus to regain their lost power and once again drive into bondage the people who have freed themselves from oppression.

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The revolution of November 7, which established the "dictatorship of the proletariat" was an inevitable result of the whole course of the Russian revolution. The consistent revolutionary forces of Russia were led to this step not only by the second act of the revolution, which began with the extremely vivid episode of the overthrow of the Romanoffs, but also by the first act, which took place in 1905. Even then, in 1905, the Russian bourgeoisie cut short the wings of the Russian revolution. Even then the disgraceful brand of a Judas Iscariot appeared as a black spot on its criminal forehead. In the face of a revolutionary upheaval it made a deal then with the decaying monarchy, and with the cynicism of an "honest" merchant betrayed the insurgent proletariat to the executioners of the Czar.

The period between the revolutions did not cause the Russian bourgeoisie to regret this step. On the contrary, it seemed to justify all the expectations and hopes. It began to grow stronger. Supported by government favors and by the high protective tariff, the industry of the country, which was in its hands, was expanding daily. This was hindered, it is true, by the extreme poverty of the internal market and by the infinite stupidity of the Czarist regime. But then it saw wide horizons of conquest and plunder beyond the borders of Russia and the cheering prospects of the world war in preparation.

But the war came and... brought nothing but bitter disappointment. The sores on the body of Russia which the Russian bourgeoisie had so diligently screened immediately cropped out. The lack of system and organization and the backwardness of the Russian economy, the rapacity of the big and small sharks, the corruption and treason of the ministers and officials of the Czar,—all this came to the surface. The armies

remained without food or ammunition, and the people were starving.

The patience of the people became exhausted and they finally burst into open revolt. Having no aims of their own in the war, forced into it by the criminal will and greedy appetite of the ruling classes, dying at the front and starving in the rear, the masses of proletarians and peasants rose to put an end to their suffering and misery.

The revolution was on, it was begun by the oppressed classes outside, and in spite of the will of, the bourgeoisie. And the fact that on March 12, that is three days before the first Provisional Government was formed the Council of Workmen's and Soldiers' Deputies was already active in Petrograd, that while the bourgeoisie was hesitating awaiting the outcome of the battles on the streets of the capital, this organ of the revolutionary will of the people was making decisions and carrying them out, showing very clearly both the place where the revolutionary flame originated and its true character. The revolutionary fire began with the sparks that were smoldering in the Labor centers and it spread to the barracks. It fired with indignation and anger the hearts of all oppressed and injured. The flame reached out not only to the throne and those around it, but also to all those who supported the throne and who planned the criminal war at the expense of the blood and life of the people.

Czarism was conquered by the street and only then the Duma, this talkative body by the "grace of the Monarch," was forced to "meet" the street. The lower classes won out and then the upper classes began to hypocritically assert their solidarity with the lower classes. But their very first step, exposed all the falsehood of their assertions. In the provisional Government which was formed there was no place for representatives of the revolutionary people. For surely the nervous, weak Kerensky, this one hour revolutionist, who became a pitiful puppet in the hands of the Russian bourgeoisie can not be considered a representative of the revolutionary people.

And this first step was followed by others which emphasized more and more the impossibility of plotting national unity in a country where the revolution was accomplished outside, and in spite of the will of the bourgeoisie. It is not surprising therefore that the "honeymoon" of the Revolution was followed by a period of internal struggle which was persistent, sharp and full of constant conflicts and bitterness.

May 1, July 1, and September 10, these are the dates—guide-posts—which inevitably led to November 7. On Nov. 1, Paul Milyukov, the servant of the imperialistic Russian bourgeoisie, sent a memorandum to the Allied Powers, stating on behalf of the Provisional Government that Russia would carry on the war to the bitter end. This was followed by May 2 and 3 when the soldiers and workers protested, bringing sharply before the people the question of in whose hands the power should be—in the hands of the representatives of the bourgeoisie or of the organs of the revolutionary will of the people; the Soviets. On July 1, Kerensky's Government ordered an offensive, as if mocking the proletariat and the army who had persistently demanded the end of the war. On July 16, the workers and soldiers in Petrograd started an insurrection which was clearly directed against the coalition Government and which showed that the question of transferring the power to the Soviets can not be evaded by any compromises or political subterfuges. On September 10, the Kornilov mutiny, which was diligently prepared by the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie and which aimed at the dissolution of the Soviets and the destruction of the revolutionary conquests of the people, took place. To this mutiny the workers, soldiers and poor peasants responded by closing their ranks more solidly around the Soviets, by clearing them of the wavering elements and by sending Bolshevik deputies in their places.

The remaining events of the first eight months of the Russian Revolution took place between these dates and their winding line marks the thorny road through which the Russian proletariat came to its dictatorship. The people demanded peace, and the bourgeoisie and its allies among the moderates in the Soviets were dragging out the war. The peasants demanded land and they were told to "wait for the Constituent Assembly," while at the same time the convocation of this Assembly was postponed time and again. The workers demanded human conditions of labor and the insolent bourgeoisie responded to this with the lock-out throughout Russia. All this was sanctioned by the Provisional Government, in which the Mensheviks and Right Social-Revolutionists acted their miserable part of screening the real ends of this systematic

sabotage with regard to the revolutionary aspirations of the masses of the people.

The revolution was in danger and had to be saved by revolutionary means. Such, indeed, was the revolution of November 7, 1917.

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The Revolution of November 7, 1917 brought the Russian proletariat into power. The great prophecies uttered by the fathers of Socialism have come true. The dictatorship of the proletariat has become a fact. The third, and greatest act of the Russian revolution has been set, an act which gave her such an additional impetus that her boundaries now extend far beyond the national confines, thereby attaching to her an international character and significance. The Revolution has become a Bolshevik—a Socialist revolution. The first step was an actual severance with those forces that had chained Russia to the war chariot of world imperialism.

The most vital and fundamental problem that the new Government faced was the cessation of hostilities. However, it was necessary, in the interests of the international proletariat, not merely to end the war, but also to reveal its inner meaning, to show that not only one side entered the war with the idea of plunder, but that also the other side, shouting about its high ideals, in reality was assiduously pursuing a policy of annexations. This was achieved through the publication of the secret treaties concluded by the Allies. The mask was torn off the "war for liberation." The fairy tale about the disinterestedness of the bourgeoisie in the "more democratic countries" vanished, and the repulsive face of the imperialist monster, greedy, rapacious and cruel, appeared before the world in all its ugliness. The international marauder received a staggering blow, and one of the most dangerous weapons they had been using was put out of action.

The publication of the secret documents decisively destroyed the last ties that bound revolutionary Russia with the imperialists of the Allied Powers. The Soviet Republic formed after the revolution of November 7, introduced a new type of foreign policy. The plots and intrigues of diplomats, their gambling with the lives of nations, were abolished. All the subsequent governmental measures of the young republic in the sphere of foreign policy have clearly emphasized her absolute sincerity, the purity of her methods, at the same bringing to light the falsity, ambiguity and greediness of the old diplomacy. The annulment of the State debts of Russia, the appeal of the Soviet of People's Commissaries to the governments of the belligerent countries regarding the peace question, the history of the peace negotiations with the Central Powers, and, finally, the attempt to end the war without assuming any obligations towards the German robbers,—all this to a certain degree united the world—German-Austrian and Allied—bourgeoisie against the Soviet republic, which dared to violate the "sacredness" of treaties and the half-decayed principles of international relations. The Allied diplomats, like Pontius Pilate, washed their hands of Russia, and handed her over to be devoured by the German birds of prey. But they went further than this, and began, at first secretly and later openly, an invasion, which, according to their plans, was to finally crush the Soviet Republic.

While the foreign policy of the Soviet government arrayed the bourgeoisie of all countries against the Russian Workers' and Peasants' Republic, its internal policy made the Russian bourgeoisie the most uncompromising, though impotent, foe of the republic. And there is little wonder in that: all the measures of the Soviet Government from the very day following the revolution of November 7, have been directed towards the expropriation of expropriators and towards the re-building of the economic-social structure of the country along Socialist lines. Socialism, indeed, was the light-house towards which the Soviets, with rare energy and the greatest self-sacrifice have turned their eyes. Along this difficult way towards the light-house, such measures as the transference of the land to the people, nationalization of finances, socialization of some of the industries and the establishment of a workers' control over others, were gigantic strides.

The Russian bourgeoisie is impotent to oppose these steps towards Socialism. Neither the sabotage of the intellectuals, nor the aid of the Czar's generals, nor the treachery of the pseudo-Socialist groups and elements have been of any avail. And neither will the bayonets of the Allied troops, avail.

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Many months have passed since the revolution of November 7th took place. The evil crowing of the foes of the Russian Soviet Republic has failed. It has not fallen. It lives and calls the whole world to a new life.