

Soviet Russia Answers the Allies

REFERRING to your letter of December 30th, we regret that we cannot share your opinion of what you consider to be the necessity of the Soviet Government's making an immediate declaration as to the conditions on the basis of which that Government would be ready to conclude peace with the Allies. We know that when the Allies, being the offending party, shall formulate their demands on the Soviet Government, the latter will not hesitate to declare openly and in the clearest terms to what extent it can meet those demands. Not only has the Soviet Government never been informed directly as to the conditions of peace which the Allies wish to put to Russia, but similar peace propositions emanating both from the Central Government, as well as from its representatives in the foreign countries have never been answered, notwithstanding the fact that the possibility of a change in internal and external policies was indicated clearly in a message to President Wilson, dated December 24th.

The Soviet Government therefore shares our opinion that there is no reason to repeat peace propositions or other declarations, in the name of Russia, since the Allies continue to give no indications for peace with Russia.

We are nevertheless ready to re-capitulate our views of possible peace conditions which were already expressed in our conversation of December 25th.

Lord Milner recently declared that one of the objects of Allied intervention in Russia was to protect the so-called "Russian friends of the Allies" against the oppressions threatening them when the regime of the Soviets should be established in those parts of Russia at present occupied by the Allies. However, this fear should in no way be an obstacle to an agreement between the Allies and the Soviets, since the latter are ready to give the so-called Russian friends of the Allies all the necessary guarantees assuring them their liberty and amnesty for their past crimes. Regardless of their politics and their past social standing, they will have a real opportunity to collaborate in the Soviet system in accordance with their ability, their education and their adaptability.

We are convinced that as soon as foreign intervention ends, the civil war in Russia under its present form will stop, and it will then be unnecessary to continue any restrictions of the liberty of the press.

We are likewise certain that as soon as Russia obtains the opportunity to work under normal conditions, and the population has adapted itself to the new social order, there will only remain a ridiculously limited portion of this population which will need to be rest-

*Letter of Maxim Litvinoff and Worovski
(Soviet Ambassador in Sweden) to a Socialist*

Recognition or Invasion

*From a note of Maxim Litvinoff to President Wilson,
December 24, 1918.*

The chief aim of the Soviets is to secure for the toiling majority of Russian people economic liberty without which political liberty is of no avail to them. For eight months the Soviets endeavored to realize their aims by peaceful methods without resorting to violence, adhering to the abolition of capital punishment which abolition had been part of their program. It was only when their adversaries, the minority of the Russian people, took to terroristic acts against popular members of the Government and invoked the help of foreign troops, that the laboring masses were driven to acts of exasperation and gave vent to their wrath and bitter feelings against their former oppressors. For Allied invasion of Russian territory not only compelled the Soviets against their own will to militarize the country anew and to divert their energies and resources so necessary to the economic reconstruction of Russia, exhausted by four years of war, to the defence of the country, but also cut off the vital sources of foodstuffs and raw material exposing the population to most terrible privation bordering on starvation.

I wish to emphasize that the so-called red terror, which is grossly exaggerated and misrepresented abroad, was not the cause but the direct outcome and result of allied intervention.

The Russian workers and peasants are determined to defend their dearly won power and liberties against invaders with all the means their vast country puts at their disposal.

I understand that the question of relations with Russia is now engaging the attention of Allied Statesmen. I venture then to submit to you, Mr. President, that there are now only two courses open to them. One is continued open or disguised intervention on the present or on a still larger scale, which means prolongation of war, further embitterment of the Russian masses, intensification of internal strife, unexampled bloodshed and perhaps total extermination of the Russian bourgeoisie by the exasperated masses, final devastation of the country and in case of the interventionists' after a long struggle obtaining their end, a white terror eclipsing the atrocities of the Finnish white guards, inevitable introduction of military dictatorship and restoration of monarchy, leading to interminable revolutions and upheavals and paralysing the economic development of the country for long decades.

The other alternative, which I trust may commend itself to you, is impartially to weigh and investigate into the one sided accusations against Soviet Russia, to come to an understanding with the Soviet Government, to withdraw the foreign troops from Russian territory and to raise the economic blockade, soothing thereby the excited passions of the masses, to help Russia to regain her own sources of supply and to give her technical advice how to exploit her natural riches in the most effective way for the benefit of all countries badly in need of foodstuffs and raw materials.

restricted in the active exercise of the rights of citizens. But until these conditions have been realized, the Soviet Republic should have the time and the opportunity

to apply the principles dominating this government, and to show what it is able to do for the good of the Russian people.

As for the present and future policy of the Soviet Government with regard to Poland, Ukraine, and the other regions of the old Russian empire, this policy will consist in avoiding every infraction of the right of these regions to dispose freely of their own destinies.

Nevertheless, the Soviet Government must simultaneously insist, that there be no intervention from any foreign power whatever in the struggle between the classes or between the parties in the above-mentioned regions. Until the relations between these regions and the Soviet Government have been finally fixed, a modus vivendi must be created which will guarantee the operation and movement of railroads, postal and telegraphic communications, exchange of commodities, transportation and traffic, free access to ports, etc.

In order to work out its economic system, Russia needs the technical, scientific, and material assistance that other countries can offer. For this reason, in case there is an agreement with the Allies, the Soviet Government would be ready to revise such decrees as concern the foreign obligations of Russia toward other countries, without however, in any way violating the fundamental principles of that government's economic and financial policy.

Among other things special attention may be given to the interests of small creditors in foreign countries. The Russian government, which is much interested in making known to the world the general principles on which it is based, and in fighting against the campaign of lies and calumnies which have been circulated against the Soviets and their work, would abstain from any propaganda in Allied countries, in order not to lay itself open to the accusation of interference in their foreign affairs. In this connection, we may declare in the most final manner, that the Soviets have never been responsible for any propaganda in any foreign country, except perhaps in Germany.

The Soviet Republic demands only that the Allies promise to cease every direct or indirect military action against Soviet Russia, every direct or indirect material assistance to Russian or other forces operating against the Soviet Government, to refrain from all acts of economic hostility or boycott under any form whatever against the Soviet Republic.

These are the principal questions which we took up in our conversation. The positions we have expressed precisely reflect those of our government. You are at liberty to use this letter in any way you think proper, in the interests of peace between the countries concerned.

This First of May—Promise and Achievement

By Ludwig Lore

THOSE of us who only know the well-dressed, respectably innocuous first of May of recent years have no conception of the power and the impetus that it evoked when it was first proclaimed as the holiday of the world proletariat by the International Congress at Paris in 1889. The motion as adopted by the Congress, it is true, simply provided for demonstrations in favor of the 8 hour day and social legislation, leaving the form the demonstrations were to take to the national units of the Social-Democracy.

The first May Day found Germany in the midst of a tremendous political rejuvenation, the period immediately following upon the fall of the notorious Socialist exception laws. Early in 1890 the party had gone through an exciting Reichstag election campaign with flying colors. The intense agitation of the Socialist forces which had emerged from this period of enforced seclusion more determined than ever, and the virulent attacks of the Bismarck government parties, which frequently culminated in actual physical assaults upon Socialist agitators and workers had aroused a fever of interest all over the country. As a result of the election Bismarck, the originator of the anti-Socialist laws, was shortly afterward overthrown; the Social-Democratic movement of Germany had won a glorious victory.

The proposed holiday of labor found the Socialist movement, therefore, in no mood to temporize. Its success in the election had cowed the bourgeoisie, and hopes ran high. Not only the organized movement in the party and in the labor unions, but even its bitterest opponents felt that the day of reckoning was at hand. Even the most conservative leaders of the labor movement foresaw the realization of their ideals within a few short years. And their very confidence woke an answering fear in the hearts of their opponents. Already they seemed to hear the thunder of the coming revolution, and great, enthusiastic masses of organized labor rejoiced in the coming.

Such was the temper of labor especially in the larger cities, that few manufacturers dared to oppose the general holiday. Red flags flaunted their message in the face of a badly frightened bourgeoisie. The spirit that enthused the demonstrators in these first years lifted the First of May above the intent of its originators. It was more than merely a demonstration for social legislation and an 8 hour day. In the eyes of the proletariat it heralded the coming of the world revolution.

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But there came other May Days. Where first the refusal to work on May 1st had been the rule it became the exception. The leaders of the movement began to feel their "responsibilities," they warned here, they checked there, and shook their heads gravely over the younger element whose foolhardiness would get the party into trouble.

In Germany the labor unions particularly opposed the injection of such radical demonstrations into the amicable relations that had been established between the workers on the one hand and the manufacturers on the other. They feared for their treasuries and objected to the payment of black-list benefits to those comrades who were outlawed by the manufacturers because they celebrated the First of May. And the Party followed suit. It, too, began to put on the brakes. May First was "celebrated" in afternoon and evening demonstrations, and mostly in hall meetings.

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This was the "evolutionary," the reformist period of the Socialist movement. We have left it behind us—a new era of revolution has begun. The years of marking time have given place to a stirring call to arms. The first of May, 1919, will be an epoch-making day for the European proletariat. Russia, whose government a year and a half ago was looked upon

as a mad adventure, has become the leader of a new world movement. In Germany the compromise government of social-patriots, trying vainly to adjust itself to the growing discontent at home and to the rapacious demands of its imperialistic conquerors, is cracking under the strain. Hungary, in spite of the pious hope of a lying press, is defending its proletarian revolution against the attacks of the neighboring nationalities. In Munich the rule of the revolutionary proletariat persists, in the face of frenzied opposition within and without. In France the bourgeoisie awaits the coming of the First of May with trembling despair, Italy is quivering on the abyss of a nation wide uprising. A First of May, full of promise, full of portent.

Nor can we here, in America, play the role of the passive onlooker. We too must give our First of May a significance in keeping with the times in which we are privileged to live.

The National office has called upon us to observe May Day in gigantic demonstrations as a protest against the imprisonment of thousands of men and women who dared to speak the truth. Aye, we will protest. But not in empty meaningless phrases. Our protest must be a solemn consecration of ourselves and our movement to the greatness of the task that lies before us. The liberation of our comrades must not come as a gift from our capitalist masters, at the price of endless restrictions and degrading promises. It must be won for them by an undaunted, determined working class, by a Socialist movement that can proudly take its stand side by side and shoulder to shoulder with its comrades in Europe. Let us be worthy of this First of May.

Comrades, refuse to work on the First of May! For one day be your own masters. We have been forced so often to celebrate the holidays of others. This one day in the year belongs to us, is our day of freedom and of happiness!