

Soviet Hungary and the Allies

By Bela Kun

*Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs--
Address Delivered to the Budapest
Workers' Council*

COMRADES: I will not utter a single beautiful word, and I beg that you will listen in deadly seriousness to what I say. The dictatorship of the proletariat is—I define it once more—the self government of the proletariat. The proletariat itself decides how it is to work and thereby really does work. Proletarian dictatorship means a break with all secret diplomacy, it means a break with every policy that requires being pursued behind the back of the proletariat. And I will here say, without exaggeration and in concrete form, all that one can and must say today about the military and foreign situation. When I use the word “can” I do not mean that I will conceal anything. When I say “can” I will tell you everything that we know, all the knowledge we can gather from the signs and symptoms.

From Comrade Kunfi's speech it is clear—we all know it is—that two world forces are fighting over Hungary, over the Hungarian Soviet Republic. The coming together of imperialistic capital and Bolshevik Socialism is taking place before us, and we are participants in the clash. The comrades know of the exchange of notes with the representative of the Entente, Gen. Smuts, who was here. It was not as if we stood on the principle of territorial integrity, not as if we wished to establish the oppressive policies of the old Hungary against the deeds of the nationalists, but it is because the Hungarian Republic of the working masses wishes to live and exist that we do not favor the pushing back of the demarcation line towards us. We are not willing to leave our freed proletarian brothers in the neutral zone to bend anew under the yoke of Capitalism, to suffer again from the exploitation of Capitalism. For this reason we are not willing to submit, for submission would mean depriving the Hungarian proletariat of the possibility of physical life. We will not accept the new boundary line, for we do not wish to lessen the territory under the rule of the proletariat, the territory over which the dictatorship of the proletariat has full sway, and we are willing to make any sacrifices rather than submit.

The Rumanian Boyar Army Offensive.

What had happened in Paris in the meanwhile is not known to us in detail.

We know, however, that the offensive was started by the Rumanian Boyar Army. It started with the whole force that the Boyars can today muster against the Hungarian Soviet Government. (Cries, shame!) We can not expect any thing else from Imperialism. (That's it!) It is not a question of morals, of likes or dislikes, but of the international class war (stormy assents), the international revolution and the international counter-revolution.

Cool and deliberate thought told us that this would come. When we established the proletarian dictatorship in Hungary we did not put out of our reckoning not being able to cope, in a systematic war, with the military power of the Entente troops. We did not believe that we could arrest the offensive, directed against us from all sides, with the six divisions that the terms of the armistice permitted the Soviet Republic to retain. We have emphasized, and continue to emphasize, that the fate of the Hungarian Soviet Republic lies with the international revolution, with the international social revolution. (That's it!) The Rumanian offensive has set in. Our troops in service on the different fronts were exhausted,

and some did not participate. It was clear to us that an army could not be easily organized, that a new revolutionary discipline could not be easily created. Armies, revolutionary proletarian armies, class armies, can form revolutionary proletarian discipline only of themselves in the war against counter-revolution, and can maintain it only of its own accord. (Lively assent and applause.) To us this was clear, we have coolly and deliberately calculated, for the revolutionary proletariat has not only a warm heart, but also a cool, calm, deliberating head.

The Rumanian offensive at first was successful; Szatmarnemeti has fallen. Now Szatmarnemeti is under bourgeois rulership, the dictatorship of the bourgeois. The rulership of the proletariat has ended and the order of private property, rightly the *anarchy* of private property, restored. The Rumanian troops are now before Nagyvarad, and within a short time the exploiting capitalist order will be again established in that city. A part, a very small part, of our troops held their ground, sacrificed everything, fought to the last drop of blood; the rest like menials ran away so that the defense was lost. Debrecen is an important point, and there the workers have suppressed the counter-revolution (lively applause), there the armed proletariat has not only not given up its power, but today holds it stronger than ever.

To relate details about this Rumanian front, is, I think, unnecessary. Towards Bekoscsaba the war situation is bad. There the troops have in part lost ground, the other part is holding out. The Rumanians are attacking everywhere with more power and better arms, better equipment, than the army of the young proletarian state has at its command. So far the offensive on the other fronts has not materialized.

At first we thought that when the foreign armies came to the demarcation lines elected by General Smuts and Colonel Vix that they would not go any further. The situation today is such that we must presuppose, and certain very well established developments lead us to believe that the Entente will take up the offensive against us with full force, that the Entente is ready to bring on us the fate of the Paris Commune, that the Entente imperialists are determined to strangle the proletariat of this land. (Calls: that we will never permit.)

Comrades! The Czech front has not yet been set moving, nor is the Southern front yet in action. I do not know, however, whether at this moment the advance has not already begun. Possibly it has, but it is also probable that it has not. If not today then perhaps it will start tomorrow . . . (interruption: mobilize!) To cry “mobilize,” comrades, is an easy thing, I also can cry “mobilize,” still it is necessary to delay the decision until I point out the consequences, till every one has perceived the whole situation.

No one must doubt that on the question of armament and equipment we are badly placed. We took over an almost impossible task in the war situation and to develop any sort of great military action during the time when we were forced to build up the new state was impossible. That is why we must first think

the situation over before we determine what to do, what can best succeed in this land where today the proletariat assumed power. Before the determination that we establish a Proletarian Dictatorship was reached there were signs from certain circles that if we were to renounce our belief in Socialism, and place our faith in the coming of a Messiah, the offensive of the Entente would not materialize, if, in other words, the Hungarian proletariat would bend its head under the yoke of triumphant Imperialism. (Interruptions: never, never!)

International Proletarian Revolution

Comrades! I speak further and beg you to hear me out quietly and seriously, for this is not the hour for enthusiasm but for deeds. (That's it, that's it!) The case is this, comrades, if a government should be established here that would again set up the old order of private property, a government that would not only make exploitation by the Hungarian capitalists possible, but would allow a double exploitation of the Hungarian proletariat—exploitation by the Entente and by the Hungarian capitalists—it may call itself Socialist or coalition, if there should come such a government, I say, should such a government take over power, and, I will add, should there be a Proletariat that will surrender its power, then, comrades, the Entente offensive will not materialize.

The alternative, comrades, is quite clear. If we do not wish for private property, the return of Capitalism, if we wish, on the contrary, to uphold the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, then we must act. We must consider immediately which forces we can use as a defense against the hostile imperialistic powers. We must bear in mind that while the territory of Hungary is small, not so immeasurably big as Russia, and having no such unlimited possibilities for defense, still the forces of the International Proletarian Revolution are at our service. If we have considered that, then we have thrown in our lot with the International Proletarian Revolution. I say it now, and will always say so, comrades, even though the Entente succeeds in instituting massacres here, that we have not been conquered if we have united our freedom with the International Proletarian Revolution. (Great applause.)

But first of all, comrades, we must reckon on our own power. While the International Proletarian Revolution is on our side, is coming, is developing, still it is necessary that we hold out until we gain the active support of the International Revolutionary Proletariat.

Our first task in this case is that everyone here in Budapest, who is not necessary in the Central Administration, every proletarian and every representative of the proletariat who can be spared, under any circumstances, must go to the front. Unity is necessary now. At this moment all friction must disappear, we must establish an iron unity that nothing can destroy or dissolve. (That's it, that's it!) Who goes to the front, must go with the knowledge that the Central Dictatorship is in good hands; who remains at his post, must believe that the fate of the Revolution is in good hands at the front. If this is so, if the proletariat, Budapest's proletariat, whose representatives, whose deputies you are, will not be lethargic, but will advance, happy in the sacrifice, in ever increasing numbers, then

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