

The truth of the matter is that both Socialist factions in Russia are the victims of a cruel fate which constitutes the tragedy of the Russian Revolution. When the Russian Revolution was accomplished, the Russian Revolutionists who were also Socialists and internationalists found themselves in the presence of a dilemma from which there was no escape, and both horns of which seemed to be fraught with fatal consequences to the Revolution. The old Tzaristic regime which they had overthrown and the old capitalist world which they hoped and strove to overthrow had saddled the Revolution with a war with which it was intimately connected, out of which it was born, and which it was called upon to liquidate. To continue the war meant to play into the hands of capitalist imperialism, giving a new lease of life to the capitalist system to the combating of which they were eager to give their undivided attention, now that their special struggle with the Russian autocracy was out of the way. But to conclude peace meant to give the victory to the most ruthless combination of imperialistic capitalism and militaristic autocracy on the face of the globe, and incidentally prepare the ground for a restoration of Tzarism in Russia.

As a question of principle the problem could be solved easily enough. And certain leading principles covering the situation were accordingly announced. The Russian Revolution was in principle opposed to a separate peace with Germany: The Russian democracy would not conclude peace with the foremost autocracy in the world, leaving it free to vanquish the western democracies. Nor would the Russian Socialists adopt a selfish nationalistic policy of securing peace for themselves only. The Russian Revolution will therefore stay in the fight. But only for the purpose of securing a peace that would be just to all—the Revolutionary proletariat knowing no distinction between “friends” and “enemies.”

But how transform these principles into practice? What are to be the powers outside of Russia on whose assistance the Russian Revolutionists could count in carrying this program into life?

Here was the real difficulty. Here the rock on which the Russian Revolutionary forces split.

One section—the “moderates”—pinned their faith on the “democracies” of Western Europe and the United States. The people of the democratic countries cannot possibly desire conquests or the imposition of such humiliating terms of peace upon their adversaries as would make a real reconciliation and a lasting peace impossible. And these peoples being democratically governed, their will must prevail as against the will of whatever special interests or imperialistic cliques there may be among them. The democratic peoples will force their governments to accept the formula of a *peace without victory*, without annexations or punitive indemnities, and with full regard for the rights of all peoples to fashion their own destinies.

The “extremists” differed from the “moderates” not in their aims or purposes, but in the choice of means deemed suitable for the carrying out of their common aims and purposes. Lenine, Trotzky, and their associates, have no faith in capitalistic “democracies.” They were convinced from the beginning that the ruling classes of the so-called “democratic” countries could no more be counted upon to support a movement for a real, just and democratic peace than Kaiser Wilhelm himself or the Tzar of Russia. The only hope of peace lay, therefore, in a general revolution, such as was accomplished by the former subjects of the White Tzar. The key to the situation lay with the German working class. If the German workers should revolt, Russia and Germany could conclude peace, which would then of necessity become a general peace. But will the German workers revolt? Lenine and Trotzky confidently believe that if properly approached they would.

The “moderates” had their innings first. The workmen’s and soldiers’ delegates gave them their support and the Kerensky government was formed. Under the leadership of the Socialists it strove to carry out its program with respect to the liquidation of the war, but it did not even as much as get a respectful hearing at the court of its “friends.” It was severely lectured by the schoolmaster at Washington. It was put off with fine phrases by the adroit Mr. Lloyd-George. And it was finally ordered about its business in a brusque and insolent manner by M. Jules Cambon—speaking in the name of the Allied governments.