

Some socialists say it was an error on the part of the Bolsheviks deliberately to pursue a policy which alienated the Allies from Russia. It was wrong, they say, deliberately to pursue a policy which alienated from the Soviets not only the Russian bourgeoisie, including the bourgeois national group in Ukraina, Finland, Poland, etc., but also the so-called moderate socialists.

I believe, however, that their policy does not involve the question of what was wrong and what was right, it is a question of what was possible and necessary or impossible in view of the social aims of the Russian Revolution and the demands as well as the power of the Russian masses. Each act on the part of the workers' government which tended to alienate the bourgeoisie and the moderate Socialists from the Bolsheviks, as for instance, the expropriation of land, the nationalization of banks, the repudiation of debts, the confiscation of church property, the abolition of capitalistic courts, etc., was an inevitable step in the necessary social transformation of Russia. The bourgeoisie could not have been appeased in this regard by anything else than by completely refraining from taking any steps which would have endangered the capitalist system. Their opposition to the Bolsheviks would have been just as relentless if the workers' government had pursued such policies in a more moderate form. The only prize with which the bourgeoisie could have been induced to support the workers' government would have been that it had not been a workers' government.

These facts do away with all the Menshevik criticism of the Bolshevik position on social questions. There can be no "middle way" in the class struggle, other than that determined by the comparative power of the opposing classes. There was no "middle way" in the class struggle of the Russian Revolution because the most fundamental and vitally necessary demands of the absolutely powerful revolutionary masses—first of all, the demand for the confiscation of land—was of such a nature that it could not be solved in any manner recognized by capitalist social philosophy and politics. The

confiscation of land automatically led to an open fight against vital principles of capitalist society, at each and every point of its development and its consequences meeting open hostility on the part of capitalist elements. It is also clear that because of the international nature of capitalism this national anti-capitalistic policy at once became a matter of international capitalistic concern, automatically alienating from Russia all capitalist elements throughout the world.

Those who believe that the social tactics of the Bolsheviks could have been different can be only those who are actually opposed to socialism as such. And it is not our intention in this article to discuss things with them.

Then there is the question of whether the military policy of the Bolsheviks could have been another,—one which in a lesser degree would have provoked German invasion of Russia. Was it an error to demobilize the Russian army, thus making it impossible to resist an invasion? Was it an error not to submit to the Hoffmann peace proposition at Brest-Litovsk, thereby being later compelled to sign a much more disastrous treaty? Was it right or wrong to start peace negotiations at all? Should Russia have stayed in the war? Let us discuss these points beginning with the last one.

Here again we find that the question is not a question of right and wrong—it is once more a question of the possible and the impossible, and of the vitally necessary. It should by now be clear to every one that ninety per cent. of the Russian people did not want to continue the war. The peace negotiations *had to be held*, altogether regardless of all the ultimate international considerations in this regard represented by the class-conscious leadership of the Russian Revolution. The army *had to be demobilized*, altogether regardless of the tactical considerations which favored such a step, as for instance, the destruction of militarism, the prevention of the army being used as a counter-revolutionary weapon, the invitation to other nations to do likewise, etc. The army demobilized itself by the very fact of the soldiers going home as soon as the