

Work, Discipline, and Order to Save the Socialist Soviet Republic

An Address by **Leon Trotsky** at the City Conference of the Russian Communist Party in Moscow, March 28th, 1918.

Comrades: The conference has met in a moment of profound internal disruption in this period that is so full of upheavals, and not in one of those moments pervaded a spirit of exaltation, a fighting spirit. Certainly we are experiencing a period of internal congestion, of great difficulties, and of internal criticism which—let us hope—will lead to an inner purification and a new advance of the revolutionary movement.

We trace our descent as a power to the October Revolution, which many of those who stood in the nearest ranks or moved parallel with us are now apparently inclined to renounce. In fact, the October Revolution is now regarded by many wise ones as a sort of adventure or a mistake.

We Communists cannot look upon the question of the October Revolution from this subjective point of view. During the course of a number of years preceding the Revolution of 1917 we not only predicted the inevitability of the new revolution, but we asserted, we theoretically predicted that when this revolution had been brought to a victorious conclusion it would inevitably place the working class, supported by all the poorest classes of the population, into power. This was called a Utopia. Now our socialistic perspective, our Communist program is called a Utopia. But the dictatorship of the working class which we predicted has become an accomplished fact, and all those "sober" individuals who saw a Utopia in this prediction were, just as our own subjective wishes, swept away by the development of the class struggle in our Revolution.

The February Revolution revealed the basic relations of the various forces. First, there was the combination of all the wealthy and propertied classes, a combination that was headed by the Cadet party in which all the contradictions and differences among the wealthy classes were sunk—for the simple reason that the Revolution had forced the crucial issue of possession as such and thus put an end to the differences within the possessing classes.

The compromise groups represented the second great camp

of the Revolution—politically a much larger one than its real social significance justified (for means which I shall mention presently), and the third camp was the camp of the working class, headed by our party, and of the toiling masses connected with the working class.

I said that the compromise camp, which imprinted its fateful seal upon the first epoch of the Revolution, appeared to itself and to others incomparably more powerful than the social character of that class from which it was recruited really warranted. I have in mind those bourgeois and petty-bourgeois intellectual circles from which these parties drew not only their leaders but also their fighting cadres.

How, then, shall we explain the fact that in the first epoch of the Revolution the parties of the Social-Revolutionists and "Mensheviki" played a leading role, thereby contributing force to the downfall and incidentally lending to the whole further process of development an extremely acute and pathological character. The explanation of this fact is that our Revolution grew out of the war, and the war had mobilized and organized the most backward, dull masses of the peasantry, giving them a military organization and thus forcing them in the first epoch of the Revolution to exercise a direct and immediate influence upon the course of political events, before these masses had had an even elementary political education under the direction of the proletariat.

Regiments, divisions, army corps elected their deputies to the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies in the same manner as the working class. But while the workers in electing their deputies started out from their natural places of work, the factories and shops, the peasants, on the contrary, did not elect peasant deputies but regimental, company, and similar deputies, since the state machine confined them in compulsory army units.

In this manner they were called upon to exert an immediate and for the most part active influence on the course of political events, before—I repeat—political schooling under the direction of the working class had given them the necessary inner stimulus and the essential minimum of political ideas. It was natural that this peasant mass should seek representatives and leaders not among their own numbers but outside of them and that they should choose them from the ranks of the petty-bourgeois intellectuals, choose volunteers, young, more or less revolutionary officers, in a word, the sons of the bourgeoisie, who