

The Victory of Bolshevism

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Volume 4 /
Issue 2

“Victory, Victory! The armies of the Allies have won! Capitulation! Capitulation! Germany has capitulated!” It is as if these words were written on the national flag that is put on all houses and detected in all hoorays of the people. Men and women from the Allied countries are running out on the streets and celebrating victory. Members of the Allied armies are loudly singing their victory chants in Beijing to the sound of trumpets and the beat of drums. In between one suddenly hears – as a distant echo to those voices of celebration and joy – how a shop window of a German merchant is smashed or how bricks from the Ketteler Monument are wrecked. It is superfluous to speak of the elation of the members of the Allied-states present in our country.

But even our people, who do not have any great relationship to this drastic change in the world, want to parade a friendly face to the outside and suck up to it. We pretend the cheerfulness of others as ours and draw on the glory of ourselves. The students organize torchlight processions, government circles celebrate (with) parties and even those generals, who did not send a single soldier to the front in that war, hold parades, flaunt their power and brandish their weapons. The politicians who wrote the book *On the History of the European War* and who predicted that Germany would win, but later advocated declaring war on Germany, politically tout for themselves by sticking their errors on the claim to others’ merits.

All this as if a small people of the world like us have nothing left to do in this world than to join in the clamorous joy, to celebrate victory and cry out “Hooray!” Thus has the victory of the Allied-armies been celebrated in Beijing.

But, as citizens of all humanity, we should carefully reflect: with whose victory and whose defeat are we really dealing? Who really deserves the merit? Who do we ultimately celebrate? If one rethinks these questions, then neither our weapon-parading generals who sent no troops, nor the shameless politicians who have arrogated the merits to themselves, deserve even the slightest interest. Even the claim of the Allies that their armed forces defeated German military power and ended the war loses all significance, as does the whole crazy revelry. For not only are their parties and boastings completely senseless, but even their very political fate can only consist in perishing together with German militarism in a not too far-off future.

The true reason for the cessation of the war is not to be sought in the victory of the military power of the Allies over the military power of Germany but in the victory of German socialism over German militarism. Who it was not the German people surrendered to the military force of the Allies but the German emperor, the militarists and militarism surrendered to this new tendency in the world. It was not the Allies who won over German militarism but the consciousness that awakened in Germany that inflicted the defeat of German militarism. The failure of German militarism was the failure of the Hohenzollern and not that of the German people. The victory over German

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/
Volume 4 /
Issue 2

militarism does not belong to the countries of the Allies and even less to our own military, who fuel civil war under the pretext of participating in the war, and even less so to our devious politicians, who seized the opportunity to gain political capital. It is rather a victory of humanism and the thought of peace, of justice and freedom, of democracy and socialism, of Bolshevism and of the red flag of the working class in the world and of the new tendency of the 20th century. Instead of saying this success is the merit of Wilson and the others, it is more correct to say that it is the merit of Lenin, Trotsky and Kollontai, of Liebknecht and Scheidemann, that it is Marx's merit. When we celebrate this great reversal in the world, our participation shall not be directed to a country or certain group of persons in some countries, but to the new dawn that has begun for the whole of mankind. We shall not celebrate the victory of one military power over another but the victory of democracy over the imperial regime and the victory of socialism over militarism.

Bolshevism is the principles that are held by Bolsheviks in Russia. What are these principles? It is difficult to explain this in one sentence. If one looks for an origin of the word, it carries the meaning 'majority.' When Alexandra Kollontai, an excellent representative of this party, was once asked by an English reporter what Bolshevism means she replied, "When one asks for the meaning of the word Bolshevik, it certainly makes no sense. It's only when one takes into account what the Bolsheviks do that one can get the meaning of this word." From the words of this extraordinary woman, then, "Bolsheviks means what they do". She calls herself a revolutionary socialist in Western Europe and a Bolshevik in Eastern Europe, and from what the Bolsheviks do it is discernible that their principle is revolutionary socialism, that their party is a revolutionary socialist party. They worship the German socialist (and) economist Marx as the founder of their doctrine. Their aim is the elimination of the frontiers that are currently an obstacle to socialism and the destruction of a system of production which brings profit to capitalists alone.

This war, too, in reality was started for the purpose of removing national borders. Because the borders of a country constitute too narrow a frame for the productive forces that have been expanded by capitalism and impair its development, all the capitalist countries attempt to eliminate these borders by means of war and to create an economic organisation that comprises all oceans and continents and connects the individual parts to each other. Insofar as the surmounting of national borders is concerned, the representatives of the socialist parties also advocate it. But the capitalist governments hope thereof for profits for the middle classes of their countries. What they count on is that the capitalist class alone in the victorious countries will control the development of the world economy, not that the producers in throughout the world will create a human and appropriate organization of collaboration and mutual help. This is why the

victorious power attempts to gain the position of a world-empire. Because the Bolsheviks saw through this, they sounded the alarm and declared this war to be a war of the Tsar, of the Emperor, of the kings and monarchs, a war of capitalist governments, but not their war.

The war they recognize is class struggle, which is the war of the proletarian masses against the capitalists of the world. They, the Bolsheviks, are decidedly against the war but they are not afraid of it. They advocate that all men and woman work and that the working people organize in a national union which is led by a central executive *soviet* council. These *soviet* councils should form the governments in all countries. There will be no congress, no parliament, no president, no prime minister, no cabinet, no legislative bodies and no rulers anymore. All decisions will be the responsibility of the *soviets* of the workers unions. All industrial companies shall in the future belong to the people who work in them. Apart from this, no right of possession will be allowed. The workers' unions will unite the proletarian masses of the world and by summoning all their forces create a free world. Initially, however, the establishment of a federation of all democratic states of Europe will provide the foundation for a world-federation. These are the principles of the Bolsheviks. This is the new confession of the world revolution of the 20th century.

The London *Times* carried a report by Harold Williams who considers Bolshevism as a mass movement and thereby comes to the conclusion that it has two similarities with early Christianity. In his opinion they are the enthusiastic party spirit and the unshakeable belief in its own end. He writes: "Bolshevism is in fact a mass movement that has some religious traits. I recall meeting a railway worker who, while doubting the existence of a highest God, explained to me with vivid words from the Bible that Bolshevism can console the soul. Everyone knows that in their history the Russian people have never had a state religion, but today in Russia knows that such radical parties want to unite to develop a great power into a new movement. For the poor Bolshevism is good news, its ideas open the shortest route to an earthly paradise. This makes clear that its attraction and authority is hidden in these simple and child-like principles. Even if the words of the authors and speakers of this party are highly unpolished and take away the beauty of the Russian language, they seem to have almost the same effect on the masses as the incomprehensible ritualistic language of the church." Williams's words prove that Bolshevism in present-day Russia wields the authority of a religion and has become a mass movement which will not only seize today's Russia but inevitably the whole world of the 20th century.

In the *Fortnightly Review* Frederic Harrison wrote: "One must know that though the aggressiveness, the intolerance and the anti-social tendencies as those of Bolshevism are an expression of a very firm, broad and deep emotional outburst, such an emotional outburst has many forms,

some of which will be unavoidable in the future.” Harrison continues: “Indeed the Revolution of the year 1789 has led to terror and excesses of the radical revolutionary party, but from the freshly foaming blood of the revolutionary wave a new world was created. Behind Bolshevism a gigantic social development is hidden, that as for the Revolution of 1789, also in Italy, France, Portugal, Ireland, Great Britain, they all fear a sudden eruption of the still concealed revolutionary activities. This hidden revolutionary current has overtaken Lombardy and Venice, and even France does not escape it. One crisis follows the other. In Ireland the movement for independence has already intensified the attacks on State affairs. Even the socialist party of England only has in its mind to shake the hands of its Scandinavian, German and Russian companions....” In his book *The Bolsheviks and the World Peace* Trotsky wrote: “The revolutionary Epoch will create new forms of organization out of the inexhaustible resources of proletarian socialism, new forms that will be equal to the greatness of the new tasks. To this work we will apply ourselves at once, amid the mad roaring of the machine-guns, the crashing of cathedrals, and the patriotic howling of the capitalist jackals. We will keep our minds clear in this hellish death music, our vision undimmed. We feel that we are the only creative force of the future. Already there are many of us, more than may seem. Tomorrow there will be more of us than today. And the day after tomorrow, millions will rise up under our banner, millions who even now, sixty-seven years after the *Communist Manifesto*, have nothing to lose but their chains. “

From this quotation it is clear that Trotsky affirms that the Russian revolution should be the first of world revolution. The Russian revolution is not one of many revolutions that will succeed in other countries of the world. Since Trotsky considers as enemies all the European governments, some have suspected his sympathy for Germany. In reality he does not sympathize either with Germany or with the Allies, nor does he nourish patriotic feelings for Russia. What he does care for are the masses of the world’s proletariat, the society of the workers of the world. This book, which Trotsky started to write in Switzerland after the beginning of the war and mostly completed before the outbreak of revolution in Russia, deals with the causes and effects of war, underlining in particular the themes of international socialism and world revolution. The two main issues of the book are world revolution and world democracy. As for the socialist parties of Germany and Austria, Trotsky definitely states that they should not abandon their original positions, they should not support the war of the capitalists, nor should they give up to the mission of world revolution.

The above quotes come from a time when the war had not yet ended and the social revolution in Germany and Austria had not erupted. Today Trotsky’s views have found an echo and the judgements of Williams and Harrison can be considered as proven. The revolution broke out in Austria-Hungary, Germany and Bavaria. In the latest of times we have received

tidings about upheavals in the Netherlands, Sweden and Spain. These revolutionary situations are similar to that of Russia. Everywhere the red flag flutters and *soviet* workers unions are formed in great number. One can say that these are revolutions of the Russian type, revolutions of the 20th century. Such an overflowing tide can neither be repelled nor stopped by current capitalist governments since the mass movement of the 20th century unites the whole of mankind. The individual people or groups of people thus merge into an enormous and compelling social force. Once this worldwide social force has been set in motion, it will have an impact everywhere in the world, as the storm has the clouds soak the air and the call echoes in the valley. Such historical remnants as emperors, aristocrats, warlords, militarism and capitalism that can hinder the progress of the new movement will be crushed by this worldwide mass movement with the force of an avalanche and the power of a lightning bolt. In light of this invincible current they will fall one by one to the ground, swept away like yellow leaves in the icy autumn wind. From now on one will see the victory banner of Bolshevism and hear the victory hymn of Bolshevism everywhere. The tocsin of humanity has tolled. The dawn of freedom has set in! The world of the future will be a world of the red flag!

I have already said somewhere else that “The history of mankind is the record in which the common psychological striving is revealed. Human lives in this great drawing are strictly and intimately linked one to the other. The future of an individual is linked to the future of all humanity. The sign of one single phenomenon is linked to the signs of the entire world.. The French Revolution of 1789 was not only the symbol of the transformations of the popular feelings of the French people, but of all t 19th-century humanity. The Russian Revolution of 1917 was not only the sign of the transformations of the popular feelings of the Russians, but the sign of the transformation of the feeling of all 20th-century humanity. The Russian Revolution is similar to a fallen leaf of a Paulonia tree that announces to the world the sudden arrival of autumn. If the word Bolshevism was coined by the Russians, the common consciousness of mankind of the 20th century is nevertheless expressed in its spirit. This is why the victory of Bolshevism is a victory of the new spirit, the victory of a common consciousness that has seized the hearts of all mankind in the world of the 20th century.

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Translated by Frank Ruda with Claudia Pozzana