

International Press Correspondence

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Agitation Theses for the 5th Anniversary of the October Revolution

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1. The international situation of the Soviet Republic.

The Soviet Republic is the first breach the Russian advance guard of the international proletariat has made in the front of international capital. The final victory of the Russian proletariat is only possible through the victory of the world proletariat. During the five years of the existence of the Soviet Republic the proletariat has only succeeded in gaining for a short time the upper hand in Finland, Hungary, Germany and Austria. But in Finland and in Hungary the proletariat was defeated by the coalition of the internal with the foreign bourgeoisie. In Germany and Austria, the proletariat itself, in consequence of the preponderating influence of the Social Democrats, gave back power to the bourgeoisie. Hence Soviet Russia is still today in the position of a single proletarian state hemmed in by capitalism. In all capitalist countries the Communist parties are the chief skirmishers against the dictatorship of capital, which under the mask of "Democracy", is still in process of formation. But though the proletariat has not been able to seize power outside of Russia, nevertheless, the whole position of the capitalist countries does not permit them to unite their forces for the destruction of Soviet Russia. The first attempt to defeat Russia by force of arms was shattered at the end of 1920, by the defeat of international capital. Capital was not in a position to unite its forces because it was hindered by the old differences between Allied and German capital as well as by the differences in the camp of the Allies themselves; through the differences between America and Japan, France and England, the Russian White Guards and the counter-revolutionaries of the border states. The economic devastation caused by the war grew from year to year, as the international bourgeoisie was incapable of uniting its forces. On the contrary it attempted to build up the economic life in the victorious states at the expense of the defeated countries. The economic devastation as well as the conflicts among the capitalist states, give rise to a fermentation process among the workers who gradually pass over to revolutionary positions. As the victorious states are unable to squeeze sufficient means out of the vanquished countries for the restoration of their economy, the bourgeoisie of these countries shifts all the burdens of economic destruction upon its own proletariat. Everywhere it proceeds to the attack against the proletariat, weakens the position of the workers and thereby refutes the Social Democratic legend with regard to the possibility of attaining Socialism by democratic means. It thus proves to the proletariat, that without revolutionary struggle, and without the overthrow of the dictatorship of capital, not only is the way to Socialism impossible, but that it is also impossible to stop the deterioration of the position of the working class.

Even though the international revolutionary movement has not been able to attain victory in the five years of the existence of the Soviet Republic, it has however, enormously hindered the military attacks of world capital against Soviet Russia, and has mobilized the working masses to the fight for power.

2. The social results of the five years existence of Soviet Russia.

During the first three years of the Soviet Republic the Russian proletariat, supported by the peasantry, destroyed the whole of the state apparatus of Czarism and the bourgeoisie which the March Revolution had left undisturbed; it finally deprived the large land-owner of power, handed over the land to the peasants, and took industry out of the hands of the bourgeoisie. The proletariat through its policy of nationalization during the first three years of the existence of Soviet Russia, created the necessary means for a successful defence of the Soviet State and the social gains of the Revolution, against the international capitalist counter-revolution which formed and supported white guards. The proletariat was able to achieve this end, only because it seized all the material resources of the bour-

geoisie, united all these resources in the iron hands of the Soviet Government, and succeeded, by a ruthless application of terror, to secure the interior. When this period of armed civil war was concluded with the victory over Wrangel, the question of economic reconstruction came to the fore. The attempt to clear the aftermath of the civil war with the aid of the workers' army, and to lay the cornerstone of economic rebirth was not successful, although this attempt was not only undertaken in the interests of the working class but also in the interests of the peasants who had had to suffer much through the poor transportation facilities and the lack of fuel. This attempt did not succeed because the defence of the country against the Polish attack and against Wrangel demanded the return of the workers' army to the front and because the continuation of the civil war in 1920 undermined still further the condition of agriculture. It was in the first place necessary to restore the peasant economy which had been extremely impoverished through the three years of World War and the three years of civil war.

Soviet Russia was compelled, when it proceeded to economic reconstruction, to return to the positions of the October Revolution, whose limits — compelled by the civil war — it often overstepped. It had to abandon the system of requisitions, which system had left the peasants with nothing but the bare minimum for maintaining life. At the time when the sons of the peasants, led by the workers, were defending their land, it was impossible to give up making requisitions from their fathers, for it was necessary to feed the army and the workers in war industries, regardless of the fact that these industries were unable to supply the peasantry with industrial products in return for bread. The policy of requisitions demanded the complete prohibition of all commerce. The fact, however, that the whole of the surplus of the peasant's labor was taken from him, destroyed every incentive to produce more than the quantity necessary for him to live on. The solution of the requisitions problem by means of a tax in kind with permission to trade with the remaining portion was not only a concession to the dissatisfaction of the peasantry which expressed itself in the Winter and Spring of 1921, but was the means for strengthening the peasant economy which is a first condition to economic reconstruction. The introduction of barter into the village also meant its rebirth in the towns.

As the state industry was not in a position, after six years of destruction, to satisfy the requirements of the peasants, it was necessary to permit private industry and commercial initiative in the town also, in order to increase the industrial funds, and with them to be able to obtain that amount of bread from the village, which the town needed for the tax in kind. The organized forces of the Proletarian State which were unable to retain under state administration the smaller nationalized industries, worked in the same direction. The state was compelled to concentrate its forces upon the reconstruction of the chief branches of the big industries. In this way the new economic policy is not a temporary retreat before the needs of the moment, but it is that proletarian policy which is only possible in a country, in which the peasantry preponderates and which is internationally isolated.

But in its retreat the Soviet Power must go still further from the social policy of the first three years of its existence. Under the burden of an enormous state debt inherited from Tsarism and the bourgeoisie, the Soviet Power was compelled to make concessions to the financial bourgeoisie, by conceding to it a portion of the already existing enterprises and the exploitation of the hitherto untouched riches of the country. Thus, as a result of the five years existence of Soviet Russia, the necessity arose of having small private enterprises in the village and trading not only in the small industries but also in the great industries, exist side by side with the great industries, railways, etc., in the hands of the Proletarian State. The concessions made to foreign capital became the starting point for the strengthening of the economic power of the Proletarian State, under the assumption that these concessions would enable the Soviet Government to

devote part of the rent received from the foreign concessionaires, for the raising of production in the large enterprises. Therefore foreign capital attempts to convert the concessions granted by the Soviet Government into compensation for the damage suffered by foreign capital through the Revolution at the same time refusing to grant any credits to the Soviets. In this way they hope to compel the Soviet Government to hand over the whole of the Russian industries, railways and natural treasures to foreign capital.

In Genoa and at the Hague the Soviet Government repelled the attempt to destroy the possibility of the economic victory of Soviet Russia in its struggle against hostile economic forces which seek to enslave the Russian economy. Russia refused to assume material obligations without being granted the necessary means for strengthening her economy. Soviet Russia is endeavouring to break through this financial blockade by concluding special agreements with various capitalist groups and countries which are most in need of relations with Soviet Russia. The result of this struggle depends upon the further development of the international situation, upon the next harvest and upon whether the economic organs of the Soviet Republic can compete with private capital on the Russian market.

3. Political results.

The world bourgeoisie sees in the new economic policy the beginning of the complete capitulation of the Soviet Government; of the complete abandonment of Socialist reconstruction on the part of the Russian proletariat. The petty bourgeois parties of Russia which paraded under the banner of Socialism, the Menshevik and S. R. parties, which were defeated by the workers and peasants in the course of the Revolution, describe, in perfect solidarity with the international bourgeoisie, the new economic policy as the beginning of the end of Soviet Russia. They have launched an attack intended to bring Russia back to the path of capitalist development, under a bourgeois-democratic form of government. In reality they are the opponents of Socialism, as they proved in the period of the March Revolution. They attempt to create conditions under which the bourgeoisie could triumph. They strive after the restoration of bourgeois democracy in the hope that under the rule of this democracy, the peasantry, which constitutes the majority of the population, would not be in a position to defend the nationalization of the great industries, and that as a class of small property owners they would make no sacrifices for the protection of the nationalized industries. But as the Menshevik and S.R. parties do not venture to appear openly with this programme, they demand in the present situation, freedom for all Socialist parties among whom they also count themselves. If this freedom were granted to them they would become an organization centre for the rich peasants and town petty bourgeoisie, and in addition to that, a legal centre of organization for the great bourgeoisie which has proved often enough that they know how to subordinate the petty bourgeois organizations. They were not capable—as they proved during the war, the March Revolution and the civil war—of opposing the pressure of the foreign bourgeoisie, but served instead as a medium for transmitting pressure upon Soviet Russia. The party of the proletariat must therefore defend its dictatorship against the demands of the petty bourgeois parties, for to allow the organization of the forces of the petty bourgeoisie, would constitute the greatest danger for the achievements of the October Revolution.

Just because the new economic policy means a partial restoration of bourgeois economic forces, all methods of the proletarian dictatorship must be employed in order to prevent these economic forces from serving the political and economic organization of the bourgeoisie.

The essence of the policy pursued by the great and petty bourgeoisie, the Left Cadets, the S.R.'s and the Mensheviks, consists in the struggle for legality on the basis of the new economic policy, taking advantage of the Soviet Constitution. The Mensheviks and the S.R.'s, appeal to the Soviet Constitution, with the slogan of "Free Soviet Elections". But the Russian proletariat and the Communist Party cannot permit the Soviet Constitution to be forged into a weapon for the destruction of the Soviet Power and the abolition of the dictatorship of the proletariat by the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. Since the Soviet Constitution originated in the struggle against the bourgeoisie and against its petty bourgeois accomplices, the S.R.'s and Mensheviks, the continued existence of the Soviets and of the economic conquests of the October Revolution must be defended by the fight against these parties, which proclaim the necessity

of working on the basis of the Soviet Constitution, in order to destroy it. In no way does this diminish the importance of the Soviets as proclaimed by the Mensheviks and the S.R.'s. The Workers' and Peasants' Councils were the weapons for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie. In the period of the civil war this was the form of the proletarian dictatorship, the clenched armed fist of the proletariat which had under its control the Red Army and the production of the country. The center of gravity was transposed from the Soviets to the war fronts and to the revolutionary organs which conducted the defence of the republic. After the end of the civil war the dictatorship of the proletariat once more manifests itself in the improvement of the economic existence of the working class and of the peasants; the Soviets are filled with new life, they seek and find new methods for the administration of the country. They will not suffer through the absence of the petty bourgeois parties; the fairy tales of the Mensheviks and the S.R.'s regarding the decay of the Soviets through the lack of free criticism are a malicious invention. In no press of the world is there such an open ruthless criticism of the activities of the government as there is in the Soviet press, which does not shrink from discussing before the hostile world all failings and all weaknesses on the part of the Soviet Government. The absence of the Mensheviks and S.R.'s from the Soviets does not mean the absence of criticism, but the absence of counter-revolutionary, destructive work from the ranks of the Workers' and Peasants' Democracy. The dictatorship of the proletariat which is exercised through the dictatorship of the Communist Party can change its methods, it can turn from the terror of the bitterest civil war to revolutionary legality, but it must be the protecting organ of the Proletarian State, it must remain ready to return to terror if the bourgeoisie venture to attempt a new attack against the working class.

4. Prospects.

The fate of the Soviet Power is inseparably bound up with the fate of the World Revolution. While in 1918 one could fear that the conclusion of the war without an immediate victory of the World Revolution would lead to the overthrow of the Soviet Power, now, after five years of its existence, we may claim with conviction, that it is sufficiently strong to overcome the effects of isolation for some time to come.

The disintegration of the bourgeoisie, the collapse of the white guards, the unmasking of the petty bourgeois parties of the Mensheviks and the S.R.'s as allies of the Russian and of the international counter-revolution, the organization of a powerful Communist Party, the slow but steady improvement of the Soviet apparatus and of the Red Army, — all these give the Soviet Power a great political advantage over all its enemies. The agricultural character of the country, permits it to recover slowly but surely from its wounds and to create the foundation for industrial restoration. The deep contradictions in the camp of the world bourgeoisie, the intensification of the social struggle in the capitalist countries, the acute crisis in the East, — all these increase the international importance of Soviet Russia and open up prospects for economic treaties with the capitalist West, which will render possible the acceleration of our industrial regeneration, the assembling of the forces of the Russian proletariat, and the improvement of the condition of the working class.

The new economic policy called forth disappointment in a large section of the proletariat of Western Europe, which is itself fighting under enormous difficulties and is not able to rid itself of the bourgeoisie once and for all; the Western European proletariat derived its hope and strength from the conviction that Soviet Russia will finish with capitalism at one blow. But every report as to our growing strength, every report as to the improvement of the condition of Soviet Russia will become a fresh impulse to the growing revolutionary power of the international proletariat and thereby to a new factor for the strengthening of Soviet Russia.

Soviet Russia must defend the breach which she has made in the front of world capital, for a longer time than could be foreseen in 1917. This circumstance places an enormous burden on the shoulders of the Russian proletariat. But the strength of Soviet Russia has even surpassed the hopes of the Russian proletariat itself, when it seized power.

For 5 years Soviet Russia has successfully repelled the attacks of the world bourgeoisie, and today, she is not only strong enough to maintain her power until the proletariat in the industrial countries finally rises to free itself from the yoke of capitalism, but is even in a position to help it in its struggle for liberation.