
Speech in Celebration of the 2nd Anniversary of Soviet Russia: Park View Place, New York City — Nov. 7, 1919.

by Santeri Nuorteva

Verbatim transcript by John F. Daly, Certified Shorthand Reporter, for the Bureau of Investigation.
DoJ/BoI Investigative Files, NARA collection M-1085, reel 938, transcript pp. 45-67.

Comrade [Ludwig] Martens asked me to express his regret that he could not be here personally. He had been invited to 5 meetings tonight and the distances between the meetings were so great, between Bronx and Brooklyn, he wanted me to express to you here the greetings of the Russian Soviet Bureau, and through that Bureau of the Russian workers, and to thank you most heartily for all the support and all the help and all the sympathy you have shown here in America toward the Russian Workers' Republic.

The Situation has Changed.

Comrades, now we are celebrating the 2nd Anniversary of Soviet Russia. We find ourselves today in a very much different situation than where we found ourselves a year ago. We were optimistic a year ago, all right. I remember very well the meetings we had last year, big great meetings all over the city of New York, the workers rejoicing of the fact that the Russian Soviet Republic had been in existence for a year. Nevertheless there was in that celebration just a little bit of doubt. A year ago it required a special enthusiasm, it required a great deal of faith, it required a great deal of conviction to believe and to know that the Russian Soviet Republic was not to go down, that it was to remain in power. Now today we do not need to doubt.

Today the Russian Soviet Republic is not a question mark any more. Today there is no doubt whatsoever about its permanency, and it is really quite the irony of fate that this assurance which today is reflected not only in our minds, which is today reflected even in the capitalistic press and even in that little group of

the Russian Reactionists in Washington, where they made an announcement where they said they are afraid that the Soviet Government will stay in power for one year more. Now today even the Reactionists and the capitalists must admit that the Russian Soviet Government is strong and stronger than they were. It is quite an irony of fate that this assurance should come within a month after your newspapers announced the absolute and impending downfall of Soviet Russia.

I shall not try to remember how many times you were told about the fall of Petrograd about 3 weeks ago, about the fall of Kronstadt, about the utter de-

struction of the Soviet power in Russia. How rapidly did everything change. But really it did not change, really there was not within the last 3 weeks a particular increase in the strength of Soviet Russia because the strength was there all the time. That last of Kolchak and his tribe against Moscow was going on the



Nuorteva & Martens

list as specimens of a dying little crowd, discouraged and destroyed and counted out from the business of the depleting of Russia. When Comrade Lenin wrote his much read, well known book on the Soviets, he said, "I would like to take as my topic today—" He spoke of the reasons why the Soviet Republic will be able to maintain itself even in the minds of capitalistic states, even in spite of attacks by an organized capitalistic government.

It has been a useful saying, a common saying among us, and the capitalists have very often represented that the Russian Soviet Republic cannot maintain itself unless there are social revolutions everywhere else in the world. Now we all know that one reason for the strength of the Russian Republic is the support of the revolutionary masses all over the world, and we are grateful for that. Nevertheless, we must admit that the social revolution even in Europe has not developed as rapidly as some of us thought that it might develop. We have seen the shame of Germany having come into the possession of the Socialist Party, having become just as reactionary and in some respects more reactionary than the regime that was there before that time. We have seen on the European continent the workers, in spite of their very courageous efforts to express their protest against imperialism, they have not been able to concentrate their forces enough to control their governments and to prevent them from carrying on imperialistic policies. And we have seen in 2 years Soviet Russia has been the object of attacks on the part of imperialistic forces and those attacks that have been directed against Soviet Russia they think have been as dangerous in themselves as certain results of those attacks.

Blockade Not Chief Obstacle.

The blockade, of course, is a very dangerous thing to Soviet Russia. It is a thing which brings very much misery because it prevents certain materials and supplies from reaching Russia. But the blockade itself is not the chief obstacle to the social development of Russia. The chief obstacle to the social development of Russia is the necessity of employing at least 75 per cent of all the forces of the country for military purposes — the social forces which could be used and ought to be used for the reconstruction of the country

— and then, of course, this situation of uncertainty, with the Allies not daring to send their own troops into Russia. They do not dare to do that, they know from experience that their armies in Russia are liable to get, as they say, "infected" with Bolshevism. The French army or the French fleet mutinied down in Soviet Russia. British regiments have several times mutinied when they were sent to Russia, and you know that even American troops were not immune from the fever when they were put around Arkhangel'sk.

Now they adopted another policy, a policy the criminality of which I hope sometime will be recorded by the historian of the future, and that was the policy of inciting the small nationalities around Soviet Russia — Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Poland, and Ukraine, every one of these small nationalities — inciting them to believe the imperialistic game and to sacrifice their blood and their life at the behest of the imperialistic powers. Now that policy is a policy which has failed — as has failed everything else which the Allies have undertaken against Russia. It has failed because in that policy itself is a dream of its own destruction. The Allies have been retaining some groups of reactionists, they have been acting in conjunction with German imperialists in seeing them do the same thing. In Finland the British alone bribed the government. They gave them 6 million pounds sterling so that they would not make peace with Soviet Russia. They have been trying to stay by Estonia in this matter. Poland would be anxious to make peace with Russia but they do not dare because the Allied governments would withdraw the financial support — new policies of a independent nation tied hand and foot by the shackles of imperialism to which they have sold themselves.

Capitalist Division Protects Soviet Russia.

Now Comrade Lenin in that book to which I referred said that there is one thing, there is one thing which in spite of the devices of the capitalists works in the interest of Soviet Russia — because it divides the forces of those who are attacking Russia — and that is the different group interests of these capitalistic powers who are attacking Soviet Russia.

Now let me explain this with a few instances. I will try to make it as brief as possible, and as little dry as possible, because the story in itself is highly inter-

esting. They tried first, as I said, to incite the small nationalities by promising them independence — independence to Finland, Estonia, and so on. Now at the same time the Allies were supporting Denikin and Kolchak. They were the exponents of the idea of undivided Russia and of course absolutely opposed to the idea of giving independent to Estonia and to Lettland [Latvia]. The result of this has been a game of broken promises, a game by which those who were playing it became all mixed up, and some of them so disgusted that they are leaving.

When that drive in the newspapers started against Soviet Russia, when you are told that Petrograd was captured, what really happened was this: On the 15th of October the parliament of Finland was called into an extraordinary session for the purpose of discussing a peace proposition from Soviet Russia, and on October 12th the representatives of Estonia and Lettland [Latvia] and Lithuania were gathered together with representatives of Soviet Russia in the city of Dorpat for the same purpose, and Poland had a good mind to send their delegates there, too. Things had developed to a point where the Estonians and the Letts [Latvians] began to understand the double game which some Allied governments were playing with them. They could not get even recognition for themselves because to give recognition would have offended Kolchak and Denikin, and so they did not give it.

There has been much talk about the Allies having sent supplies to the Baltic Provinces. Now I will tell you this, that since the armistice there have been just two shiploads of foodstuffs sent into Estonia, and that was at the very beginning of this game. Since that time food shipments to those countries have been held up, and the hunger of those masses has been used as a pressure upon them to make them keep armies together and to fight Soviet Russia.

Now the Estonian bourgeoisie was of course in no principle averse to fighting Soviet Russia, but they wanted something for nothing, they wanted recognition of their independence and they could not get it. They wanted real support for their armies but that action was not in accord with the interests of certain imperialistic brutes because they did not want to establish strong national units there. So they began to think about peace with Soviet Russia. Exactly the same thing happened in Lettland [Latvia].

In Lithuanian something happened which was still more interesting. You notice that the French protested against the German General staying in the provinces. Von der Goltz went there at the express wish of the Allied powers. There was one provision in the terms of the armistice which was of particular significance. The armistice which was signed about a year ago provided that the German troops should be withdrawn from all occupied territory, except from Russia; they should be withdrawn from Russia according to orders given in the future by the Allies. Now the reason for not withdrawing German troops from Russia was that they wanted to keep them there to prevent, as they said, Bolshevism, and so von der Goltz, who had just accomplished the mission of killing and executing tens of thousands of workers, went into the Baltic Provinces, went there not against the wishes of Britain — as they tried to tell you in the newspapers — but remained there at their express command. I have seen some documents which prove the thing fully. For example, there is a proclamation issued by the so-called National Council in August of this year [1919]; in that proclamation the leading National Council states that about June they undertook an effort to drive von der Goltz out from their country, and they had good chances of driving him out. They commenced an offensive against him, and then that proclamation says — and it is signed by the bourgeoisie of the leading National Council — it says at the express orders and instructions of the Allied Military Missions they were compelled to make an armistice with von der Goltz, and he remained there.

There are other things of the same nature which show that the British were particularly interested in maintaining a reactionary German force in the Baltic Provinces. Now why did the French oppose von der Goltz? They did really do that, but they had another reason, and this again tells you how that game is being played in these faraway countries of the world. France has a particular reason and a particular design to develop a strong government and a strong state in Poland. After having lost Tsarist Russia and not being quite sure that Tsarist Russia will ever arise again, France would like to have a strong Poland, which would be a good place for the investment of French money, and which would at the same time be a barrier between Russia and Germany. In order to create a strong

Poland the French government made a separate agreement with Poland whereby they promised Poland Lithuanian at the same time the other Allies were promising Lithuania independence, and while they were promising Lithuania to Poland, the British were maintaining von der Goltz there, who also had a good eye on Lithuania, because Lithuania was expected to form a nucleus of that new Baltic German state which the German Junkers thought would be a very nice thing to establish there, and it was on that basis that all those conflicts arose which led to the awful mortality in the Baltic Provinces.

It is for that reason that some Russian General is attacking Riga, and they are fighting against him, but again there is alive his road with the British and they are all there in that mixed-up game which at first seems altogether quite transparent, but when you go into this group interest of the capitalist class you find just exactly what it is. But, as I said, in this muddle there is something which is good. It is this disparity, this panicky, intriguing policy, which makes these whole nations in the Baltic Provinces open their eyes and understand that their only salvation is peace and good will with Soviet Russia, and they got to that poise around October 15th when they were all ready to make peace with Soviet Russia and the situation really was desperate. If those countries had made peace with Soviet Russia, why the whole blockade would have gone into shambles. If the Baltic States are open for trade, why they cannot prevent trade with Russia. If Finland breaks the blockade, why they cannot prevent her from sending goods to Russia, and if peace had been made at that time it would have met an absolute disavowal and disintegration of this policy.

Coordinated Lies Subvert Peace Process.

It was then that this drive of lies was undertaken, it was then that the newspapers all over the world were filled with news about the impending downfall of the Soviet government, and now when I received newspapers from Finland they tell me several details which made this story perfectly clear. In Finland there was a majority in the parliament which would have voted for peace. Two days before, all telegrams, communications, and telephone communication to the eastern part of Finland was closed. The military authorities in

Finland took hand of the situation. The newspapers were filled with all these lies, the reflection of which came over here to America. A number of those telegrams were often dated — and a state of doubt was created. The Russian reactionaries and the Finnish reactionaries went to parliament, they began to work on the doubtful element. They told them, “Now if you make peace with Soviet Russia, why the Soviet government will be out of business in 2 weeks and what are you going to do then? You will offend the new rulers and don’t you think that those in power then will take revenge on you?”

The printed stories that General Yudenich would be in Petrograd in two weeks, and he would lay a penalty of 20 million marks in case they made peace with Russia, and under this pressure they compelled them to abandon the peace negotiations and they succeeded in that respect as far as Estonia and Lettland [Latvia] were concerned, too. Now that was a disparaging, gambling game, of course. It could not well succeed. They just played a disparaging game. They took a chance. Perhaps something miraculous might happen that they might escape. They took it seriously.

I do not know whether you all read the interesting telegram in yesterday evening’s *Globe* sent from Stockholm by the correspondent by the name of Isaac Don Levine. He said that those rumors about taking Petrograd came from Stockholm and became the point of concentration. They had steamships in the Finnish Gulf laden with bacon and beans and pork and that great statesman continued with this kind of action. They thought he would take the steamers to Petrograd and distribute a few cans of pork and beans to the population and say, “Look here. Now they eat here. And wouldn’t you overthrow your government? You do and then you will get a can if you do.” (*Laughter.*) They did all that. They had the Grand Dukes there in this coming to Stockholm and they were all dressed up and ready to go to Petrograd. He said in his telegram that a certain government sent a whole fleet of airships to Stockholm ready to fly with all the Grand Dukes and the rest of the gang, and then as the day passed and it became more and more evident that not only would Yudenich not go to Petrograd, but pretty soon he would be eliminated out of the game, and all that company was sitting there all dressed up and no place to go. (*Laughter.*) He said a gloomy spirit came

over them and that now in Stockholm the opinion is prevailing that any new efforts are useless, that there is nothing else to do but to try to come to some terms with Soviet Russia.

Now I am not as optimistic as that. I do not think really that they will come exactly to terms with Soviet Russia within a month or two. They might come in 2 or 3 or 4 or 5 months. I am sure there will be one more spasmodic effort to fool public opinion, there will be a new set of lies given to you — or have they begun it already?

They had a perfectly beautiful story the day before yesterday in the *New York Times* that Soviet Russia is abolishing the names of children, and they call them Child No. 1 and 2 because they do not want to retain anything that smacks of the old civilization. (*Laughter.*) Now you see that they have been lying, so that new lies are getting pretty stale. They are getting more and more impossible. They will try that all right. There will be a few weeks from now a new spasmodic effort that Soviet Russia is going to pieces anyhow.

And then there is something else — perhaps more important than anything else. A few days ago I met in the city of Washington a very high official of the United States government who just returned from Europe, and although I do not know his view, whether it is sympathetic toward Soviet Russia or not, he told me this: That now, irrespective of everything else, it will be almost impossible for any European government to continue the policy of intervention, because he said that neither England nor France have any money left for their war appropriations. If they are to continue the war with Russia they will have to go before their parliament and ask for appropriations and they do not stand a ghost of a chance to get anything because the policy they are pushing about Russia cannot stand explanation before any open body. He was confident that because of this thing it was altogether out of the question that the intervention would continue. Now I am not quite so sure about that. There are always some kind of secret funds to be had in government quarters, and there is a lot of junk left from the war which Denikin and Kolchak might employ which is useful.

Spirit of Opposition Exists Right Here.

There is something else which has become more and more evident today and that is a more and more conscious opposition in every country against the policy of intervention. Now your press and your government officials and all those bodies have been established to find what they say is Bolshevik propaganda. They say it is Bolshevik agents who are exciting the workers all over the world to protest against their governments. Now it isn't quite that. There are very few of us Bolshevik agents in the foreign countries, there are so very few of us and we are not suffering with such swell heads that we would think that we would be able to create all this spirit of opposition. The spirit of opposition exists right here. The Russian Republic in itself was so perfectly crazy and perfectly senseless that it did not require really very much effort of thinking to find out that it should not continue.

Then, on the other hand, it is easy for the workers to understand that the economic pressure, the economic instability of the world, is very much due to the fact that they are still maintaining the blockade. There are factories in the United States at a standstill because they have not got enough orders, and those people understand very well. Why do they not open the channels of trade? There is a kind of reaction because of that. But there is among the workers everywhere an astounding, really astounding, amount of a spirit of protest.

I will tell you a little story that happened in your capitol yesterday night and it was, to my mind at least, quite significant. There was in session the International Labor Women's Congress. Now that congress is not a very radical body, as radical goes nowadays. It could not very well be because the delegates to that Women's Congress — although they are not as handpicked as the men to the National Men's International Congress — nevertheless, the governments in every country have been able to prevent really radical people from going by refusing passports to them. So it is quite a respectable body of women that gathered in Washington. They discussed many questions, and then all at once the question of the blockade of Russia came up. Now I want you to assure yourself that there was no propaganda work done among these women. They knew all about it without any outside propaganda. There was

not a single question in that body which aroused such attention and such enthusiasm and when it was put to a vote, a demand to lift the blockade was unanimously adopted — and the French delegates voted with both their hands, and our delegates voted with both their hands. There was nothing which received such support as that.

In the evening something very interesting happened, too. They arranged for a banquet, as usual at conferences of that kind, and the banquet was held in one of the most exclusive hotels in Washington, Hotel Lafayette, and there were all kinds of people at that banquet, for example, the wife of one of the Cabinet officers and some other prominent ladies and gentlemen. During the banquet somebody proposed that they should sing, and somebody suggested they sing the “Marseillaise.” The French delegates stood up and protested. They said, “No ‘Marseillaise,’ ‘Marseillaise,’ ‘Marseillaise’ is a bourgeois song. In our country everybody sings the ‘Marseillaise.’ Let us sing ‘The Internationale,’ they said.” (*Applause.*) And there was some little hesitation and silence. The managers of the banquet, they said that the music band could not play it. But they said, “Well, we will sing it without playing,” and so those European delegates in that select Washington hotel, with all the prominent ladies and gentlemen in Washington present, they stood up and took each other by the hands, and they formed a ring around the table and they sang “The Internationale.” (*Applause.*) They sang so that it sounded all over the place. Now I do not know that it created any particular sensation, but that was only for the reason that those who were placed there to watch over the conference did not know what the song was. But it is significant, it is significant that this spirit of international solidarity of the workers is permitted every place, and it comes in connection with the Russian question.

Now they are accusing agents of the Bolsheviks for propaganda for Russia. I will tell you right here, frankly, without hesitation — the blockade has done much damage to Russia, and the attacks of the Allies have caused us very much misery. On the other hand, there isn't a single thing in the world which has made our cause more popular and more known and more supported among the workers than those very things. (*Applause.*)

Capitalist Actions are Backfiring.

Here is something of the policy of the capitalist class nowadays. They are very much like that King of the old Greek tale, that King Midas, who expressed a wish that everything he touched should turn into gold, and so the tale goes on, his wish was fulfilled; and when he tried to eat, his foot changed into gold, hot gold, and it choked him. It choked him when he tried to eat. So it is with the policy of the Imperialists all over the world. Whatever they undertake at this time, whether it is calculated to bother them in any respect, it turns against them.

The policy of blockade has been a great sorrow to us in Russia in another respect — it has caused us privation and misery. But on the other hand, under the pressure of these attacks the Russian workers have been solidified and they have been able to develop that revolutionary cohesion which has made it possible for them to stand up for 2 years against all the attacks against them from every conceivable part of the world.

We have been attacked because they say we have chaos and inefficiency in Russia. Now, there is really nothing that we have to apologize for. I am sure that the impartial history of 10 or 15 years from now not only will not accuse us of lack of efficiency, they will marvel at that strength and that ability of economic organization which the Russian Soviet Government and the masses had been so capable of, to create an organization to maintain itself for 2 years in a country divested of everything, without any outside help, without any support, and with the necessity of employing 75 percent of all their constructive forces for the purpose of defending their country against outside attacks. It is really marvelous.

I believe you have all read that story printed in yesterday's *Globe* written by Isaac Don Levine, where he writes of the military review they held in Tula on October 6th. I remember now that October 6th was when your papers here in New York had Trotsky and Lenin in jail or that they had fled somewhere. On October 4th Isaac Don Levine went to Tula — he speaks of Tula as the Bethlehem of Russia, meaning that Tula is today a factory, a city full of busy factories, steel factories, munition factories, they must have such things — and then he spoke of that parade and these are the very words he mentions. He says that regiment

after regiment passed by. Their chief received the parade. He spoke of the magnificent cavalry they had there, the infantry, the artillery, the armored car detachments, and then to lend an artistic touch to the whole picture he says there were airplanes and huge big airships flying above the parade in all the glory and beauty of it.

Now it is quite astonishing for a Socialist to get all enthusiastic over a parade. For the first time in the history of the world we see that the working class of a certain country is united. It is for a real effort to establish there the rule of the proletariat, and it is that thing which gives them strength. It is that thing which makes it possible for them to utilize every little bit of economic possibility to get it together, and in spite of the extraneous oppression and attack, to maintain themselves for 2 years.

Now, comrades, I am glad to see so many of you today. I have been at another meeting. There was an enthusiastic crowd of workers and I heard applause and hurrahs from above. There was a meeting in celebration of the 2nd Anniversary on the 2nd floor of that same building. I know that there are many such places all over New York today, tens and scores of them. I know that there are such meetings all over the country, and I know that in Europe everywhere the workers are getting together and celebrating the Russian celebration, and it has become the main political and economic question in every country.

They have an election in France next week. What is the main question in the French election? It is Russia. They have political struggles in England today. What is the question that agitates the minds of the people there more than anything else? It is Russia again. What is it that your papers are talking about every day? Every day and every column they are speaking of Bolsheviks and Bolshevism. They see it everywhere. The editor sees it beneath his table and ink pot. And everywhere they see it, even where it isn't.

Their state of mind shows that the Russian Revolution during 2 years of its existence has exerted a tremendous influence on the minds of the people all over the world, not because of artificial propaganda on the part of this or that man. How stupid to believe that! It

is because in the mirror of the Russian Revolution capitalist society is being reflected just as it is. Just as the first thing the Russian Revolution did was to publish the secret treaties, was to reveal all the inside game of international politics, so today in the mirror of Russia you see all the schemes and the intrigues of powers who are trying to extricate themselves from the hole in which their own economics and their own class rule put them. And somehow or other they cannot find a way out and so they stumble along — they try today this, tomorrow that, the next day something else. Things are changing, governments are changing, why there are enough cries in Europe, changes of every kind... Among these cries there is just one thing which stands up, not changing, and the same rising every higher and higher — the Workers' Republic of Russia. (*Applause.*)

What Soviet Russia Wants.

We want just one thing over there. Just one thing. We want to be left in peace, so that we may concentrate our forces on that work of construction and reconstruction which is before us there. We want to do that, and we are sure that if left alone, if not pestered by all these little dogs that are trying to bite us in the legs, around us, we will be able to show the world that the Russian Workers' Revolution is not a crazy thing, it is not a freak, it is not an invention of 1 or 2 or 3 men, that it really inaugurates an era of a new social order and we want to work it out and it is that very thing which the capitalist class is afraid of. They are afraid of us, not because we have disorder — they are afraid of us because we have not. They are not afraid of us because we have chaos — they are afraid of us because we have not. They are not afraid of us because we are incompetent — they are afraid because we are competent. They are not afraid because we are not able to accomplish things — they are afraid from the opposite reason, but that goodness it is not in their hands to determine whether we are to live or not. They have tried for 2 years to determine that and have not succeeded. The Russian Workers have decided that they shall live and they will live. (*Applause.*)

Edited by Tim Davenport.

Published by 1000 Flowers Publishing, Corvallis, OR, 2007. • Non-commercial reproduction permitted.