

The Bloody Week in Moscow

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Preface

Our bloody century has turned another bloody page of history. Mankind, bleeding and ruined by madness, is helplessly floundering at the mercy of social laws not yet curbed. But in social life, as in dead nature, there are inevitable catastrophes, and there are also preventable ones: an earthquake is inevitable, but a lightning strike can be deflected.

Was this civil war in Moscow really inevitable? By whom was it ignited? In the name of what goals? How was it waged?

To answer all these questions fully is to write the history of this nightmarish, fratricidal war. The task of the author of these lines is not so broad.

During the bloody week, I was in the Zamoskvoretsky district, in the hotbed of Bolshevism, and I want to speak about what I saw, heard and read during those oppressive days and share the reflections they provoked. Let others tell what was going on in the city centre and other districts.

Taking a position to the left of the Bolshevik Social-Democrats in my convictions, perhaps my assessment of events will be more impartial, since it will judge not the extremity of the aims, but the means to achieve them.

In the Zamoskvorechye district

On Friday morning, 27 October, when I left the Kursk railway station (I was on temporary leave), life in Zamoskvorechye was outwardly going on as usual. Only the absence of many local and Petrograd newspapers, especially the large liberal-bourgeois organs, was conspicuous.

In the afternoon I went to the Council of the Moscow Federation of Anarchist Groups, and here I learnt for the first time that the anarchists had “acted” — they had seized the printing office of the “Moskovskii Listok” and had also forcibly occupied, against someone’s will, the “duty desk” and the telephone office in the Council of Workers’ Deputies. Calling on the telephone Comrade A. V., one of the editors of “Anarchy” who was on duty in the Council, I asked him about the course of events. In reply to the comrade’s question as to my opinion of the speech, recalling the Petrograd seizure of the printing-house, from which the comrades were led out by the Cossacks, guarding them from the excited crowd, I replied that I thought “we shall sit down again in a shoe.” And indeed we did sit down again, but this time, alas, in a bloody puddle, spilled by the brotherly hand of the Socialist-Statesmen, the invaders of the eternally accursed power...

At the invitation of Comrade A. V., I immediately went to the Council, on Skobelev Square, in the hope of dissuading my comrades from further participation in the civil war being waged.

I reached there at nine o’clock in the evening. There was great excitement on the square, clumps of people were waiting for something, but I did not notice any general speeches by speakers. At the entrance to the Soviet premises there was a guard of 7–8 young soldiers demanding a pass. Having been refused to escort me to the “anarchists’ table” on duty, I wrote a note, which they took to hand over. In a minute a young man accompanied by a short, middle-aged woman came to the entrance with my note in his hands and for some reason asked me where the paramedic was. I gave my profession as a doctor (there was no indication of my profession in the note), and they immediately took me into the house and began to ask me to organise medical assistance, to choose a safer and more suitable room, etc. I remarked to them that I had not come for that, but that in my opinion, to organise serious help, it would be better to turn

to the ready-made medical and sanitary apparatus of the town, and offered my mediation. The lady, who turned out to be a paramedic, asked: "Only we must hurry, the telephones have been interrupted and from one o'clock to the next the attack may begin."

Having had a quick talk with my comrade Warrant Officer S., who had replaced A. at the "anarchists' table," I went on foot through all kinds of roundabout streets, as in some places the passage was forbidden by patrols of Junkers under the command of young officers, to the City Duma. Here there was no less excitement than in the former Governor-General's House, and the young officers who were in charge of the entrance to the Duma flatly refused to let me pass or to call anyone from the sanitary department, saying that no one was present.

The next day, 28 October, there were no trams in Zamoskvorechye from the morning. Later, carriages with flags of the red cross began to appear occasionally and cars with sisters of mercy began to appear. The mood of almost all the sisters was joyful, smug, their faces shining. On the pavements walked in groups of young girls with improvised red cross armbands on their sleeves – with hastily stitched from red-brown scraps or simply painted crosses. Some were strikingly slovenly, with a dirty knot in one of their apron pockets, and it seemed that if seeds were not pulled out of the other pocket and snapped, it was because they were not sold on the street.

The "Red Guard" also came out into the street, with guns of various models, with and without bayonets, some with revolvers, some with draughts, and one of them even had a mish-mash official's sword on his side, apparently "requisitioned" during a search.

The Red Guards did not have enough weapons, and an order was issued to search and seize weapons from private individuals and even to disarm house committees.

The Red Guards consisted almost entirely of teenagers under the early conscription age, less frequently there were 20–25 year olds, sometimes students, but I don't remember meeting a single respectable armed worker on the street.

The Red Guards looked busy.

Later armed soldiers also appeared on the streets. They stood in frequent posts of 2–3 men, then disappeared at once and there were single guardsmen. There was no enthusiasm in the soldiers; they stood idly in the midst of the crowd, and only in some places did passers-by gather round them and inquire into their mood and the simple construction of their helpless thoughts.

To the sound of occasional gunfire and rifle shots, the people, the average city dweller, ran through the streets, stood on the pavements in queues in search of food and the printed word. The more intimidated stood at their doors, not venturing far into the street.

On the first day the townspeople still dared to enter into a cautious dispute with the soldiers who were standing at their posts or flanking them, but afterwards they became more cautious and prudently shut up. At the corner of Polyanka and Spasalonivkovskaya a civilian was beaten by soldiers as a result of such a conversation. Another was arrested by Red Guards, and he tried to explain to them that he had "said the wrong thing." Many students took off their uniforms, and in the streets one met officers in civilian coats, and only the cockade on their caps indicated their rank. Arrested officers were occasionally seen, and they were led by Red Guards. In front of one of the arrested men was a young fellow with a red cross on his sleeve and a revolver in his hand.

On 1 November, about one o'clock in the afternoon, I met a Red Cross car speeding from Zatsëpa towards Serpukhovskaya Square; through the open door, a bloody head hung down from a heap of corpses in something grey, seemingly overcoats. A young, intelligent face, a long neck... "Must be tall," flashed through my mind.

On Zapetsky Val, near house No. 16, by the pavement, a large spot of fresh blood, covered with yellow sand from a nearby heap. In the assembled group of passers-by there was talk:

"The crooks have been killed, three of them."

"There were four of them."

"One was writhing on the ground, shot at point-blank range by four revolver shots."

"Robbers dressed as soldiers... they go round the houses as if to search them, and there — "give me your wallet!"

"They asked for IDs, they didn't have any."

"They've been after them for a long time."

"They've been after them since morning."

An old, thin, poorly dressed intellectual asked:

"Who knows who was killed?"

A grey commoner asked:

"How can you do that? Does it take a long time to be wrong?"

In the bulletin of the Military Revolutionary Committee of the Zamoskvoretsky district of 3 November:

"The other day the Red Guards shot four pogromists caught in the act of committing a crime."

At the scene of the crime?

But I was there at the scene in five minutes — I found no traces of the crime except the murder. Locked houses all round, no broken benches, no signs of mayhem.

Who was murdered?

The public conscience should demand a public enquiry.

On 29 October, in the afternoon, a particularly intensified rumble of guns was heard from the direction of the Kremlin, and a thick column of smoke from the fire was visible from the Krasnokholmsky Bridge. A 12-year-old sturdy boy from the people who met here gave the only correct assessment of what was happening, an assessment that had eluded entire political parties:

"The Russians are beating the Russians."

A robust worker who passed by added:

"What a freedom!"

And the day before, an old woman in the back, waiting in line, sighed:

"And will this freedom end soon?"

The closest tangible consequence of the civil war artificially caused by the Bolshevik Social-Democrats was the upward spike in prices and the intensification of the city's economic ruin.

On 4 November the employees of the post office refused to work because the Bolsheviks tried to inspect the correspondence. Material ruin was followed by moral ruin.

On 3 November I stood on Serpukhovskaya Square in a long queue that encompassed the square in a double ring, waiting for the only newspapers, *their* “Social-Demokrat” and “Izvestiya”. It was not until two hours later, about noon, when I unfolded the sheet, that I learnt that “they had won” and “peace” had been concluded. For two hours people came up, bought the paper, read it and left in silence. Not a single cry of jubilation, not the slightest bit of joy, not a simple desire to share the outcome in the longing for the awaited end...

Why?

Because it was not a people’s revolution, but a criminal party conspiracy.

There were no victors in the people. All day long, while silently, duskily wandering through the streets, and looking at the faces, it was impossible to guess who was the *victor* and who was the *vanquished*.

The truth is that we were all defeated and stood by the pile of still cold corpses, senselessly, aimlessly, needlessly killed comrades, brothers... This is how the fratricidal uprising in Moscow was carried out in mortal longing for what we had experienced and with anxiety for tomorrow.

How they brought about the coup d’état

The first necessary condition for the successful execution of the criminal, bloody plot of the Bolshevik Social-Democrats was to plunge the people into the darkness of ignorance and to shelter themselves from a more powerful means of struggle than brute force — *free criticism*. From 28 October to 4 November not a single leaf of the non-Bolshevik press penetrated into the Zamoskvoretsky district.¹ Probably the same was true in the whole territory of the “victors”.

This circumstance did not stop the flow of specific profanity against their opponents on the part of the instigators of the bloody civil war. Here are samples of the literature of these ringleaders of the people to the highest stage of culture, to socialism:

“Every word of these newspapers,” writes the Social-Democrat in No. 198 — listing the newspapers “Delo Naroda,” “Volya Naroda,” “Rabochaya Gazeta,” “Narodnoe Slovo,” “Soldiers’ Creek,” etc. (how many opponents they have!) — “*are written with the spit of a rabid dog.*”

“The Menshevik hooligans are falling for the tricks of the Black Hundred hooligans. At one time the Black Hundreds in St. Petersburg began to publish the newspaper Narodnaya Pravda in order to cover the bright name of Pravda with *their sticky and stinking filth.*” (No. 199 of Social-Demokrat).

We’d better quit quoting further...

It was not until 4 November that the skinny half-sheet of “Labour” appeared in Zamoskvorechye with the fiery articles “They have won!” and “The Crimes of the Bolsheviks.”

But the crime, the gravest, the most irreparable of them all, was the shedding of blood: On the one side of the workers, of children under the early conscription age, of children armed by the criminal hand of the ringleaders and solemnly dubbed “the Red Guard”; and on the other of “a

¹ The fanaticism of individual Bolsheviks reached the point that already after the “conclusion of peace” an acquaintance of a comrade-doctor F. had a first issue of “Labour” torn out of his hands and destroyed.

crowd of Junkers' boys, student boys and gymnasium students," as they were dubbed by the very "Izvestia of the Moscow Military-Revolutionary Committee" (No. 1, of 3 November), this crime, this "beating of infants" was completed.

I believe that if the dark forces of Social-Democratic Bolshevism had not made a pogrom of the whole press, especially the Socialist press, it is possible that the soldiers would not have been drawn into the struggle by the young enthusiasm of the Red Guards, that events would have developed at a slower pace, and that the coup d'état, if indeed it was imminent, would have taken place bloodlessly. We have all seen the Moscow garrison in the streets, in queues for shoes and tobacco, selling everything, both government goods, down to rifles, and even their own — speculating in retail at railway stations, in the markets, in the streets. Even at the height of the civil war I saw soldiers selling bread, woollen gloves, and felt boots near Taganskaya Square. Except for an insignificant minority, it is difficult to suppose in them an ideology of even Bolshevik proportions.

Having extinguished the fires of common sense and free criticism, the Bolshevik Social-Democrats began strenuously to muse on the imaginary enforcement of their slogans: decrees on a constituent assembly, on land, on peace, on the abolition of the death penalty, on social insurance, etc.

Their decrees

The disintegration of the modern order is rapidly drawing to a close; the world war is dealing the last decisive blows to the very foundations of the modern order of social life — *private property* and *state power*. Mankind is searching in the darkness for a way to a higher order of ethical and economic life.

Into this revolutionary ferment of building a better future, the socialist-statesmen have injected the poison of the decay of outmoded power. They have all assured the people that there is no salvation outside the framework of statehood, that only power, and that only in their hands, can lead the people to the promised land of socialism.

To build a new life, systematic revolutionary work is needed, and to seize power it is enough to promise more benefits to the gullible people.

The slogans of the Bolsheviks are the flame of the overdue social restructuring; their means are the outmoded statehood. They plotted to conquer a new and better world with worthless weapons. The people rushed to the glittering hope of realising their cherished desires over the corpses of their less ardent brothers.

The slogans of the Bolsheviks are the healthy ideals of the people; their means of realisation are false decrees.

The decree on the Constituent Assembly is an election preparation stolen from the former government. He who is poorly acquainted with the fundamental and technical difficulties which the Provisional Government encountered in drawing up the "Provisions on the Election to the Constituent Assembly" to reconcile the aspirations of the numerous nationalities to be more fully represented in the Constituent Assembly, to organise in practice the electoral technique from the cultural centres to the semi-wild nomadic tribes, should be surprised not at the fact that the elections to the Constituent Assembly have been postponed so far, but at the courage of Kerensky, who decided to carry out the elections at any cost.

And Ulyanov-Lenin, you see, in three days came, saw and “decreed” the long-awaited Constituent Assembly!

They did not accelerate but disrupted the elections to the Constituent Assembly, they prolonged the illusion among the people that the Constituent Assembly had the power to give them what they did not have in life — organised order. Having been convinced by the “new master of the Russian land”, how could the people not turn to the “old master”?

And there is no one to explain to the people that social order, like a building, is laid from the foundation, from the free community, and not from above!

The decree on land is a farce calculated to influence the illiterate, unenlightened people. The first paragraph states that “landlord ownership of land shall be cancelled immediately without any compensation”, and the fourth paragraph makes it clear that this is a temporary measure, that the final decision on land reforms depends on the Constituent Assembly.

Next, the “guidance on the implementation of the great land reform” is *decreed* as law by a confusing newspaper article from No. 88 of the “Izvestiya All-Russian Soviet of Peasant Deputies”.

A newspaper editor in the role of the Constituent Assembly, this is the super-democratism of the ideologists of the dictatorship of the proletariat, who only yesterday were fruitlessly hanging around the streets of foreign cities and who came to us *by the grace* of the German autocrat to “*decree*” the confusion in our lives, in the hands of German militarism.

But what does the newspaper article say, “declared to be a provisional law, which from now on until the Constituent Assembly shall be put into practice as *immediately* as possible”? The newspaper article-law, proclaimed by decree, “as an expression of the unconditional will of the great majority of the conscious peasants of the whole of Russia,” states that all land, not excluding peasant land, is converted “into the national patrimony,” and that there are no exceptions in it as regards the land of “ordinary peasants and ordinary Cossacks.”

By such shameless deceit the invaders of power influence the dark peasant masses in grey overcoats to inflame and inflame the fratricidal war.

And there is no one to explain to them that land, like freedom, *is not given*, but *taken*; that it must be done in peace, and the more organised it is done, the less violence against people, against the same landlords, the calmer will be the conscience of the working people who are coming into their rights!

A decree for peace!... Yesterday they fanned enthusiasm with the promise of *immediate peace*; today they say only that they “*propose* to all belligerent peoples and their governments to *begin immediate negotiations* for a just democratic peace.” These illiterate people dubbed their confused proposal a *decree* for peace. As if Ulyanov-Lenin and Bronstein-Trotsky were omnipotent to prescribe to the governments of Wilhelm and all other states and all peoples their terms of peace!

And with what will we force them to accept *our* peace, *democratic* peace, and not impose an imperialist peace with annexations, with indemnities, with enslavement of peoples? Our weakness? Our disorganisation? Or the threat of a separate peace? But it is clear that the Allies will continue the war without us, with America *in our place*. And then it will not be a separate peace, but a shameful alliance of the Russian people with German militarism and the transfer of the war to a new front.

The people who have shed the blood of their native people in the civil war to overthrow the concordat with their helpless liberal bourgeoisie, are themselves entering into concordat with the powerful German reactionary and militarist bourgeoisie.

And there is no one to explain to the people that the only way to achieve the much desired just peace is to organise the struggle not only against internal capitalism, but also against external militarism!

Is this what the Bolsheviks in power are inviting people to do? Do they raise a people's militia against the worst enemy of the world, Teutonic militarism, after the overthrow of our internal absolutism? Without this, *no separate social revolution is possible*.

The decree abolishing the death penalty, *their* decree, is the mass murder in the civil war of their own blood brothers, after Kerensky's declaration that no death sentence would be signed by him.

The government announcement on social insurance for wage labourers and the *urban* and *rural* poor states that the entire cost of insurance will be borne entirely by the entrepreneurs. But who are the entrepreneurs of the urban and rural poor?

They promised more *bread* to the people. By what means? Their "military-revolutionary committee in Petrograd proposed that all employees of the expedition for procuring state papers not leave their jobs," announced one telegram.

The nightingale is a fable, but the people are not fed with the paper junk of a bankrupt statehood. It is necessary to organise production and exchange by the hands of the workers themselves, without masters. But is this to be done by a sudden political coup?

And there is no one to explain to the people that it is not by the useless criminal shedding of fraternal blood, not during the civil war for the seizure of power, that a social revolution is made, but by the organised transfer of production into the hands of the working people, without power, in political anarchy!

Who is to blame?

During the week of bloodshed in Moscow, not one thousand young human lives were lost. The counting of the victims has not yet been made. A young comrade-doctor, who worked all those bloody days in the centre and travelled by car to all districts to render first aid to the wounded, told me that the number of casualties among the fighters was put at two thousand, apart from the inevitable in urban warfare accidentally killed citizens, women and children.

Who is the culprit of this fratricidal massacre, caused by the strife between Socialists of two different persuasions? How could a brother's hand rise against his brother?

After all, it is ridiculous to brand the Social-Democratic City Duma, headed by Rudnev and Minor, as "traitors, traitors to the people, defenders of Moscow bigwigs," as the Bolshevik Social-Democrats try to portray it.

One theory and one category of people are to blame.

Theory, it is the same theory that divides mankind into two classes, as a teacher divides the globe by the equator into two halves. It is a crude theory, pretending to be scientific in the intellect of narrow sectarians. Yes, scientific, but adapted to the thought of limited minds, to the outlook of primitive man. This theory has been rattled about for several decades by socialists of all schools, from anarchists to extreme centralist-statesmen. After the February Revolution our propaganda spilled over widely. The results are obvious. We created in our dark nation a class struggle which degenerated into a *zoological struggle* according to external features: grey overcoat against gilded epaulettes, handkerchief against hat, working jacket against surtoute.

Thanks to this theory the Bolshevik Social-Democrats succeeded in stirring up hatred between members of the same family; in organising the bombardment of the people's representatives — members of the Socialist Duma; in calling the youth and Junkers who rallied round them on 29 October “sons of factory workers, landlords, speculators” (*Listok Sots.-Democrat*, 29 Oct.), and on 3 November, after the disgraceful victory, to recognise them as “boy-junkers, boy-students and gymnasium students” (*Izvestiya M. V.-R. Committee*, No. 1).²

And who are the people who instigated this unwanted, unnecessary and therefore criminal civil war?

This is that part of the intelligentsia, that emigrant and exiled intelligentsia, which, having hardly returned to their homeland, rushed to the still warm seats of the tsarist bureaucrats, but there were more invited than elected, and many remained “out of office”. Rare, exceptional were the Kropotkins, who themselves refused ministerial portfolios, the posts of envoys, and the comedy of elections. All the others, the ambitious and envious, led a systematic siege of the ministerial chairs, began to pour day after day into the dark masses of the people and into the minds of the green youth the poison of their tabloid phraseology, their talentless writings, where words calculated for effect replace feeling, a shout replaces enthusiasm, a chewed-up phrase replaces science.

Yes, the autocracy avenged itself cruelly, by the hands of its own half-victims!

² In the Alexander Military School, 25 per cent of the Junkers are made up of lower ranks who have returned from the front to receive better military training. In all other schools, according to the minimum estimate, more than 50 per cent are young people from the 4th and 5th grades, who have been torn away from general education by financial constraints or enthusiasm for the love of the fatherland — will the selfish big bourgeoisie send their children to the most dangerous military field? In Petrograd, during this civil war, two Junkers, comrades of my realist son, both children of teachers, among many others, were killed.

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Original translation of Кровавая неделя в Москве.

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