

# **Russian Revolution and the Communist Party**

Alexander Berkman

1922

# Contents

Preface . . . . .	3
The Russian Revolution and the Communist Party . . . . .	3

## **Preface**

Clarity of ideas is not characteristic of the average mind. Many people still continue to think and to talk of the Russian Revolution and of the Bolsheviki as if the two were identical. In other words, as if nothing had happened in Russia during the last three years.

The great need of the present is to make clear the difference between that grand social event and the ruling, political party — a difference as fundamental as it has been fatal to the Revolution.

The following pages present a clear and historically true picture of the ideals that inspired the Revolution, and of the role played by the Bolsheviki. This pamphlet conclusively proves what the Russian Revolution IS and what the BoIshevik State, alias the Communist Party, *is not*.

I consider this brochure a very able, and for popular reading sufficiently exhaustive, analysis of the Russian Revolution and of the causes of its undoing. It may be regarded as an authoritative expression of the Anarchist movement of Russia, for it was written by Anarchists of different schools, some of them participants and all of them well versed in the events of the Revolution. It is the joint work of four well known Moscow Anarchists. Their names cannot be mentioned at present, in view of the fact that some of them are still in Russia. Nor are their names important in this connection: rather is it the subject and its treatment. I hereby accept full responsibility for the contents of the following pages, as I am also responsible for the rendering of the Russian manuscript into English.

I take this occasion to correct the erroneous statement contained in Rudolf Rocker's Preface to the German edition of this pamphlet, regarding its authorship. This brochure was written in Moscow, in June, 1921, and secretly forwarded to Rocker. Because of a misunderstanding Comrade Rocker ascribed the authorship of the manuscript to one person, hinted at but unnamed in Rocker's Preface. The fact of the authorship is as stated above.

## **The Russian Revolution and the Communist Party**

The October Revolution was not the legitimate offspring of traditional Marxism. Russia but little resembled a country in which, according to Marx, "the concentration of the means of production and the socialisation of the tools of labor reached the point where they can no longer be contained within their capitalistic shell. The shell bursts..."

In Russia, "the shell" burst unexpectedly. It burst at a stage of low technical and industrial development, when centralisation of the means of production had made little progress. Russia was a country with a badly organised system of transportation, with a weak bourgeoisie and weak proletariat, but with a numerically strong and socially important peasant population. In short, it was a country in which, apparently, there could be no talk of irreconcilable antagonism between the grown industrial labor forces and a fully ripened capitalist system.

But the combination of circumstances in 1917 involved, particularly for Russia, an exceptional state of affairs which. resulted in the catastrophic breakdown of her whole industrial system. "It was easy for Russia", Lenin justly wrote at the time, "to begin the socialist revolution in the peculiarly unique situation of 1917."

The specially favorable conditions for the beginning of the socialist revolution were:

1. the possibility of blending the slogans of the Social Revolution with the popular demand for the termination of the imperialistic world war, which had produced great exhaustion and dissatisfaction among the masses;
2. the possibility of remaining, at least for a certain period after quitting the war, outside the sphere of influence of the capitalistic European groups that continued the world war;
3. the opportunity to begin, even during the short time of this respite, the work of internal organisation and to prepare the foundation for revolutionary reconstruction;
4. the exceptionally favorable position of Russia, in case of possible new aggression on the part of West European imperialism, due to her vast territory and insufficient means of communication;
5. the advantages of such a condition in the event of civil war; and
6. the possibility of almost immediately satisfying the fundamental demands of the revolutionary peasantry, notwithstanding the fact that the essentially democratic viewpoint of the agricultural population was entirely different from the socialist program of the "party of the proletariat" which seized the reins of government.

Moreover, revolutionary Russia already had the benefit of a great experience — the experience of 1905, when the Tsarist autocracy succeeded in crushing the revolution for the very reason that the latter strove to be exclusively political and therefore could neither arouse the peasants nor inspire even a considerable part of the proletariat .

The world war, by exposing the complete bankruptcy of constitutional government, served to prepare and quicken the greatest movement of the people — a movement which, by virtue of its very essence, could develop only into a social revolution.

Anticipating the measures of the revolutionary government, often even in defiance of the latter, the revolutionary masses by their own initiative began, long before the October days, to put in practice their Social ideals. They took possession of the land, the factories, mines, mills, and the tools of production. They got rid of the more hated and dangerous representatives of government and authority. In their grand revolutionary outburst they destroyed every form of political and economic oppression. In the deeps of Russia the Social Revolution was raging, when the October change took place in the capitals of Petrograd and Moscow.

The Communist Party, which was aiming at the dictatorship, from the very beginning correctly judged the situation. Throwing overboard the democratic planks of its platform, it energetically proclaimed the slogans of the Social Revolution, in order to gain control of the movement of the masses. In the course of the development of the Revolution, the Bolsheviki gave concrete form to certain fundamental principles and methods of Anarchist Communism, as for instance: the negation of parliamentarism, expropriation of the bourgeoisie, tactics of direct action, seizure of the means of production, establishment of the system of Workers' and Peasants' Councils (Soviets), and so forth.

Furthermore, the Communist Party exploited all the popular demands of the hour: termination of the war, all power to the revolutionary proletariat, the land for the peasants, etc. This, as we shall see later, base demagoguery proved of tremendous psychologic effect in hastening and intensifying the revolutionary process.

But if it was easy, as Lenin said, to begin the Revolution, its further development and strengthening were to take place amid difficult surroundings.

The external position of Russia, as characterised by Lenin about the middle of 1918, continued to be “unusually complicated and dangerous”, and “tempting for the neighboring imperialist States by its temporary weakness” The Socialist Soviet Republic was in an “extraordinarily unstable, very critical international position”.

And, indeed, the whole subsequent external history of Russia is full of difficulties in consequence of the necessity of fighting ceaselessly, often on several fronts at once, against the agents of world imperialism, and even against common adventurers. Only after the final defeat of the Wrangel forces was at last put an end to direct armed interference in the affairs of Russia.

No less difficult and complex, even chaotic, was the internal situation of the country.

Complete breakdown of the whole industrial fabric; failure of the national economy; disorganisation of the transportation system, hunger, unemployment; relative lack of organisation among the workers; unusually complex and contradictory conditions of peasant life; the psychology of the “petty proprietor”, inimical to the new Soviet regime; sabotage of Soviet work by the technical intelligentsia; the great lack in the Party of trained workers familiar with local conditions, and the practical inefficiency of the Party heads; finally, according to the frank admission of the acknowledged leader of the Bolsheviki, “the greatest hatred, by the masses, and distrust of everything governmental” — that was the situation in which the first and most difficult steps of the Revolution had to be made.

It must also be mentioned that there were still other specific problems with which the revolutionary government had to deal. Namely, the deep-seated contradictions and even antagonisms between the interests and aspirations of the various social groups of the country. The most important of these were:

1. the most advanced, and in industrial centers the most influential, group of factory proletarians. Notwithstanding their relative cultural and technical backwardness, these elements favored the application of true communist methods;
2. the numerically powerful peasant population, whose economic attitude was decisive, particularly at a time of industrial prostration and blockade. This class looked with distrust and even hatred upon all attempts of the Communist government to play the guardian and control their economic activities;
3. the very large and psychologically influential group (in the sense of forming public opinion, even if of a panicky character) of the common citizenry: the residue of the upper bourgeoisie, technical specialists, small dealers, petty bosses, commercial agents of every kind — a numerous group, in which were also to be found functionaries of the old regime who adapted themselves and were serving the Soviet government, now and then sabotaging; elements tempted by the opportunities of the new order of things and seeking to make a career; and, finally, persons torn out of their habitual modes of life and literally starving. This class was approximately estimated at 70% of the employees of Soviet institutions.

Naturally, each of these groups looked upon the Revolution with their own eyes, judged its further possibilities from their own point of view, and in their own peculiar manner reacted on the measures of the revolutionary government.

All these antagonisms rending the country and, frequently clashing in bloody strife, inevitably tended to nourish counter-revolution — not mere conspiracy or rebellion, but the terrific convulsion of a country experiencing two world cataclysms at once: war and social revolution.

Thus the political party that assumed the role of dictator was faced by problems of unprecedented difficulty. The Communist Party did not shrink from their solution, and in that is its immortal historic merit.

Notwithstanding the many deep antagonisms, in spite of the apparent absence of the conditions necessary for a social revolution, it was too late to discuss about driving back the uninvited guest, and await a new, more favorable opportunity. Only blind, dogmatic or positively reactionary elements could imagine that the Revolution could have been “made differently”. The Revolution was not and could not be a mechanical product of the abstract human will. It was an organic process burst with elemental force from the very needs of the people, from the complex combination of circumstances that determined their existence.

To return to the old political and economical regime, that of industrial feudalism, was out of the question. It was impossible, and first of all because it were the denial of the greatest conquest of the Revolution: the right of every worker to a decent human life. It was also impossible because of the fundamental principles of the new national economy: the old regime was inherently inimical to the development of free social relationship — it had no room for labor initiative.

It was apparent that the only right and wholesome solution — which could save the Revolution from its external enemies, free it from the inner strife which rent the country, broaden and deepen the Revolution itself — lay in the direct, creative initiative of the toiling masses. Only they who had for centuries borne the heaviest burdens could through conscious systematic effort find the road to a new, regenerated society. And that was to be the fitting culmination of their unexampled revolutionary zeal.

Lenin himself, replying in one of his works to the question, “How is the discipline of the revolutionary party of the proletariat to be maintained, how to be strengthened?” clearly and definitely replied: “By knowing how to meet, to combine, to some extent even to merge, if you will, with the broad masses of the toilers, mainly with the proletariat, but also with the non-proletarian laboring masses”. (Italics are Lenin’s.)

However, this thought was and still remains, on the whole, in irreconcilable conflict, with the spirit of Marxism in its official Bolsheviki interpretation, and particularly with Lenin’s authoritative view of it.

For years trained in their peculiar “underground” social philosophy, in which fervent faith in the Social Revolution was in some odd manner blended with their no less fanatical faith in State centralisation, the Bolsheviki devised an entirely new science of tactics. It is to the effect that the preparation and consummation of the Social Revolution necessitates the organisation of a special conspirative staff, consisting exclusively of the theoreticians of the movement, vested with dictatorial powers for the purpose of clarifying and perfecting beforehand, by their own conspirative means, the class-consciousness of the proletariat.

Thus the fundamental characteristic of Bolsheviki psychology was distrust of the masses, of the proletariat. Left to themselves, the masses — according to Bolsheviki conviction — could rise only to the consciousness of the petty reformer.

The road that leads to the direct creativeness of the masses was thus forsaken.

According to Bolsheviki conception, the masses are “dark”, mentally crippled by ages of slavery. They are multi-colored: besides the revolutionary advance-guard they comprise great numbers

of the indifferent and many self-seekers. The masses, according to the old but still correct maxim of Rousseau, must be made free by force. To educate them to liberty one must not hesitate to use compulsion and violence.

“Proletarian compulsion in all its forms”, writes Bukharin, one of the foremost Communist theoreticians, “beginning with summary execution and ending with compulsory labor is, however paradoxical it may sound, a method of reworking the human material of the capitalistic epoch into Communist humanity”.

This cynical doctrinairism, this fanatical quasi-philosophy flavored with Communist pedagogic sauce and aided by the pressure of “canonized officials” (expression of the prominent Communist and labor leader Shliapnikov) represent the actual methods of the Party dictatorship, which retains the trade mark of the “dictatorship of the proletariat” merely for gala affairs at home and for advertisement abroad. Already in the first days of the Revolution, early in 1918, when Lenin first announced to the world his socio-economic program in its minutest details, the roles of the people and of the Party in the revolutionary reconstruction were strictly separated and definitely assigned. On the one hand, an absolutely submissive socialist herd, a dumb people; on the other, the omniscient, all-controlling Political Party. What is inscrutable to all, is an open book to It. In the land there may be only one indisputable source of truth — the State. But the Communist State is, in essence and practice, the dictatorship of the Party only, or — more correctly — the dictatorship of its Central Committee. Each and every citizen must be, first and foremost, the servant of the State, its obedient functionary, unquestioningly executing the will of his master — if not as a matter of conscience, then out of fear. All free initiative, of the individual as well as of the collectivity, is eliminated from the vision of the State. The people’s Soviets are transformed into sections of the Ruling Party; the Soviet institutions become soulless offices, mere transmitters of the will of the center to the periphery. All expressions of State activity must be stamped with the approving seal of Communism as interpreted by the faction in power. Everything else is considered superfluous, useless and dangerous.

This system of barrack absolutism, supported by bullet and bayonet, has subjugated every phase of life, stopping neither before the destruction of the best cultural values, nor before the most stupendous squandering of human life and energy.

\* \* \*

By its declaration *L’état c’est moi*, the Bolshevik dictatorship has assumed entire responsibility for the Revolution in all its historic and ethical implications

Having paralysed the constructive efforts of the people, the Communist Party could henceforth count only on its own initiative. By what means, then, did the Bolshevik dictatorship expect to use to best advantage the resources of the Social Revolution? What road did it choose, not merely to subject the masses mechanically to its authority, but also to educate them, to inspire them with advanced socialist ideas, and to stimulate them — exhausted as they were by long war, economic ruin and police rule — with new faith in socialist reconstruction? What has it substituted in place of the revolutionary enthusiasm which burned so intensely before?

Two things, which comprised the beginning and the end of the constructive activities of the Bolshevik dictatorship:

1. the theory of the Communist State, and

## 2. terrorism.

In his speeches about the Communist program, in discussions at conferences and congresses, and in his celebrated pamphlet on “Infantile Sickness of ‘Leftism’ in Communism”, Lenin gradually shaped that peculiar doctrine of the Communist State which was fated to play the dominant role in the attitude of the Party and to determine all the subsequent steps of the Bolsheviki in the sphere of practical politics. It is the doctrine of a zigzag political road: of “respites” and “tributes”, agreements and compromises, profitable retreats, advantageous withdrawals and surrenders — a truly classical theory of compromise.

Scorning the “chuckling and giggling of the lackeys of the bourgeoisie”, Lenin calls upon the laboring masses to “steer down the wind”, to retreat, to wait and watch, to go slowly, and so on. Not the fiery spirit of Communism, but sober commercialism which can successfully bargain for a few crumbs of socialism from the still unconquered bourgeoisie — that is the “need of the hour”. To encourage and develop the virtues of the trader, the spirit of parsimony and profitable dealing: that is the first commandment to the “regenerated” people.

In the pamphlet referred to, Lenin scouts all stereotyped morality and compares the tactics of his Party with those of a military commander, ignoring the gulf which divides them and their aims. All means are good that lead to victory. There are compromises and compromises. “The whole history of Bolshevism before and after the October Revolution”, Lenin sermonises the “naive German left Communists” who are stifling in their own revolutionary fervor, “is replete with instances of agreements and compromises with other parties, the bourgeoisie included”. To prove his assertion, Lenin enumerates in great detail various cases of bargaining with bourgeoisie parties, beginning with 1905 and up to the adoption by the Bolsheviki, at the time of the October Revolution, “of the agrarian platform of the socialists-revolutionists, in toto, without change”.

Compromise and bargaining, for which the Bolsheviki so unmercifully and justly denounced and stigmatised all the other factions of State Socialism, now become the Bethlehem Star pointing the way to revolutionary reconstruction. Naturally, such methods could not fail to lead, with fatal inevitability, into the swamp of conformation, hypocrisy and unprincipledness.

The Brest Litovsk peace; the agrarian policy with its spasmodic changes from the poorest class of peasantry to the peasant exploiter; the perplexed, panicky attitude to the labor unions; the fitful Policy in regard to technical experts, with its theoretical and practical swaying from collegiate management of industries to “one-man power”; nervous appeals to West European capitalism, over the heads of the home and foreign proletariat; finally, the latest inconsistent and zigzaggy, but incontrovertible and assured restoration of the abolished bourgeoisie — such is the new system of Bolshevism. A system of unprecedented shamelessness practiced on a monster scale, a policy of outrageous double-dealing in which the left hand of the Communist Party is beginning consciously to ignore, and even to deny, on principle, what its right hand is doing; when, for instance, it is proclaimed, on the one hand, that the most important problem of the moment is the struggle against the small bourgeoisie (and, incidentally, in stereotyped Bolshevik phraseology, against anarchist elements), while on the other hand are issued new decrees creating the technological and psychological conditions necessary for the restoration and strengthening of that same bourgeoisie — that is the Bolshevik policy which will forever stand as a monument of the thoroughly false, thoroughly contradictory, concerned only in self-preservation, opportunistic policy of the Communist Party dictatorship.



However loud that dictatorship may shout about the great success of its new political methods, it remains the most tragic fact that the worst and most incurable wounds of the Revolution were received at the hands of the Communist dictatorship itself.

An inevitable consequence of Communist Party rule was also the other “method” of Bolshevik management: terrorism.

Long ago Engels said that the proletariat does not need the State to protect liberty, but needs it for the purpose of crushing its opponents; and that when it will be possible to speak of liberty, there will be no government. The Bolsheviks adopted this maxim not only as their socio-political axiom during the “transition period”, but gave it universal application.

Terrorism always was and still remains the ultima ratio of government alarmed for its existence. Terrorism is tempting with its tremendous possibilities. It offers a mechanical solution, as it were, in hopeless situations. Psychologically it is explained as a matter of self-defense, as the necessity of throwing off responsibility the better to strike the enemy.

But the principles of terrorism unavoidably rebound to the fatal injury of liberty and revolution. Absolute power corrupts and defeats its partisans no less than its opponents. A people that knows not liberty becomes accustomed to dictatorship: fighting despotism and counter-revolution, terrorism itself becomes their efficient school.

Once on the road of terrorism, the State necessarily becomes estranged from the people. It must reduce to the possible minimum the circle of persons vested with extraordinary powers, in the name of the safety of the State. And then is born what may be called the panic of authority. The dictator, the despot is always cowardly. He suspects treason everywhere. And the more terrified he becomes, the wilder rages his frightened imagination, incapable of distinguishing real danger from fancied. He sows broadcast discontent, antagonism, hatred. Having chosen this course, the State is doomed to follow it to the very end.

The Russian people remained silent, and in their name — in the guise of mortal combat with counter-revolution — the government initiated the most merciless warfare against all political opponents of the Communist Party. Every vestige of liberty was torn out by the roots. Freedom of thought, of the press, of public assembly, self-determination of the worker and of his unions, the freedom of labor — all were declared old rubbish, doctrinaire nonsense, “bourgeois prejudices”, or intrigues of reviving counter-revolution. Science, art, education fell under suspicion. Science is to investigate and teach only the truths of the Communist State: the schools and universities are speedily transformed into Party schools.

Election campaigns, as for instance the recent re-elections to the Moscow Soviet (1921), involve the arrest and imprisonment of opposition candidates who are not favored by the authorities. With entire impunity the government exposes non-Communist candidates to public insult and derision on the pages of the official newspapers pasted on bulletin boards. By numberless stratagems the electors are cajoled and menaced, in turn, and the result of the so-called elections is the complete perversion of the people’s will.

State terrorism is exercised through government organs known as Extraordinary Commissions. Vested with unlimited powers, independent of any control and practically irresponsible, possessing their own “simplified” forms of investigation and procedure, with a numerous staff of ignorant, corrupt and brutal agents, these Commissions have within a short time become not only the terror of actual or fancied counter-revolution, but also — and much more so — the most virulent ulcer on the revolutionary body of the country.

The all-pervading secret police methods, the inseparable from them system of provocation, the division of the population into well-meaning and ill-disposed, have gradually transformed the Struggle for the new world into an unbridled debauch of espionage, pillage and violence.

No reactionary régime ever dominated the life and liberty of its citizens with such arbitrariness and despotism as the alleged “dictatorship of the proletariat”. As in the old days of Tsarism, the “okhranka” (secret police section) rules the land. The Soviet prisons are filled with socialists and revolutionists of every shade of political opinion. Physical violence toward political prisoners and hunger strikes in prison are again the order of the day. Summary executions, not only of individuals but en masse, are common occurrences. The Socialist State has not scrupled to resort to a measure which even the most brutal bourgeois governments did not dare to use: the system of hostages. Relationship or even casual friendship is sufficient ground for merciless persecution and, quite frequently, for capital punishment.

Gross and barbaric contempt for the most elementary human rights has become an axiom of the Communist Government.

With logical inevitability the Extraordinary Commissions have gradually grown into a monstrous autocratic mechanism, independent and unaccountable, with power over life and death. Appeal is impossible, non-existent. Even the supreme organs of State authority are powerless before the Extraordinary Commissions, as proven by bitter experience.

\* \* \*

The Bolshevik Party is not in the habit of scorning any perversion of truth to stigmatise every anti-Bolshevik criticism or protest as “conspiracy” of one of the “right” socialist parties: of the social-democratic Mensheviki and Socialist-Revolutionists. Thus the Communists seek to justify brutal repressions against the “right elements”. In regard to the Anarchists, however, Bolshevik terrorism cannot be “justified” by such means.

It is apropos here to sketch, though very briefly, the mutual relations between Anarchism and Bolshevism during the Revolution.

When, in the first days of the Revolution (1917), the laboring masses began the destruction of the system of private ownership and of government, the Anarchists worked shoulder to shoulder with them. The October Revolution instinctively followed the path marked out by the great popular outburst, naturally reflecting Anarchist tendencies. The Revolution destroyed the old State mechanism and proclaimed in political life the principle of the federation of soviets. It employed the method of direct expropriation to abolish private capitalistic ownership: the peasants and workers expropriated the landlords, chased the financiers from the banks, seized the factories, mines, mills and shops. In the field of economic reconstruction the Revolution established the principle of the federation of shop and factory committees for the management of production. House committees looked after the proper assignment of living quarters.

In this early phase of the October Revolution, the Anarchists aided the people with all the power at their command, and worked hand in hand with the Bolsheviks in supporting and strengthening the new principles. Among the legion of enthusiastic fighters of the Revolution, who to the end remained true to the ideals and methods of Anarchism, we may particularly mention here Justin Zhook, the founder of the famous Schluesselburg powder mill, who lost his life while performing revolutionary military duty; also Zhelesnyakov, who with rare strength and courage dispersed the Constituent Assembly, and who afterwards fell fighting against counter-revolutionary invasion.

But as soon as the Bolsheviki succeeded in gaining control of the movement of the masses, the work of social reconstruction suffered a sharp change in its character and forms.

From now on the Bolsheviki, under cover of the dictatorship of the proletariat, use every effort to build up a centralised bureaucratic State. All who interpreted the Social Revolution as, primarily, the self-determination of the masses, the introduction of free, non-governmental Communism, — they are henceforth doomed to persecution. This persecution was directed, first of all, against the critics from “the left”, the Anarchists. In April, 1918, the ruling Communist Party decided to abolish all Anarchist organisations. Without warning, on the night of April 12<sup>th</sup>, the Anarchist club of Moscow was surrounded by artillery and machine guns, and those present on the premises ordered to surrender. Fire was opened on those resisting. The Anarchist quarters were raided, and the following day the entire Anarchist press was suppressed.

Since then the persecution of Anarchists and of their organisations has assumed a systematic character. On the one hand our comrades were perishing on the military fronts, fighting counter-revolution; on the other, they were struck down by the Bolshevik State by means of the Extraordinary Commissions (Tcheka).

The further the ruling Party departed from the path marked out by the October Revolution, the more determinedly it oppressed the other revolutionary elements and particularly the Anarchists. In November, 1918, the All-Russian Conference of the Anarcho-Syndicalists, held in Moscow, was arrested *in corpore*. The other Anarchist organisations were broken up and terrorised. Because of the total impossibility of legal activity, some Anarchists decided to “go underground”. Several of them, in cooperation with some left Socialist-Revolutionists, resorted to terrorism. On September 25, 1919, they exploded a bomb in the building (Leontevsky Pereulok) in which the Moscow Committee of the Party was in session. The Anarchist organisations of Moscow, not considering terrorism a solution of the difficulties, publicly expressed disapproval of the tactics of the underground group. The government, however, replied with repressions against *all* Anarchists. Many members of the underground group were executed, a number of Moscow Anarchists were arrested, and in the provinces every expression of the Anarchist movement was suppressed. The finding, during a search, of such Anarchist literature as the works of Kropotkin or Bakunin, led to arrest.

Only in the Ukraina, where the power of the Bolsheviki was comparatively weak, owing to the wide-spread rebel-peasant movement known as the Makhnovtschina (from its leader, the Anarchist Makhno), the Anarchist movement continued to some extent active. The advance of Wrangel into the heart of the Ukraina and the inability of the Red Army to halt his progress, caused Makhno temporarily to suspend his struggle with the Bolsheviki for free Soviets and the self-determination of the laboring masses. He offered his help to the Bolsheviki to fight the common enemy Wrangel. The offer was accepted, and a contract officially concluded between the Soviet Government and the army of Makhno.

Wrangel was defeated and his army dispersed, with Makhno playing no inconsiderable part in this great military triumph. But with the liquidation of Wrangel, Makhno became unnecessary and dangerous to the Bolsheviki. It was decided to get rid of him, to put an end to “Makhnovtschina”, and, incidentally, dispose of the Anarchists at large. The Bolshevik government betrayed Makhno: the Red forces treacherously surrounded Makhno’s army demanding surrender. At the same time all the delegates who had arrived in Kharkov to participate in the Anarchist Congress, for which official permission had been given, were arrested, as well as the Anarchists resident in Kharkov and the comrades still en route to the Congress.

Yet, in spite of all the provocative and terroristic tactics of the Bolsheviki against them, the Anarchists of Russia refrained, during the whole period of civil war, from protesting to the workers of Europe and America — aye, even to those of Russia itself — fearing that such action might be prejudicial to the interests of the Russian Revolution and that it may aid the common enemy, world imperialism.

But with the termination of civil war the position of the Anarchists grew even worse. The new policy of the Bolsheviki of open compromise with the bourgeois world became clearer, more definite, and ever sharper their break with the revolutionary aspirations of the working masses. The struggle against Anarchism, till then often masked by the excuse of fighting “banditism in the guise of Anarchism”, now became open and frank warfare against Anarchist ideals and ideas, as such.

The Kronstadt events offered the Bolsheviki the desired pretext for completely “liquidating” the Anarchists. Wholesale arrests were instituted throughout Russia. Irrespective of factional adherence, practically all known Russian Anarchists were taken into the police net. To this day all of them remain in prison, without any charges having been preferred against them. In the night of April 25<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup>, 1921, all the political prisoners in the Bootirka prison (Moscow), to the number of over 400, consisting of representatives of the right and left wings of socialist parties and members of Anarchist organisations, were forcibly taken from the prison and transferred. On that occasion many of the prisoners suffered brutal violence: women were dragged down the steps by their hair, and a number of the politicals sustained serious injuries. The prisoners were divided into several groups and sent to various prisons in the provinces. Of their further fate we have so far been unable to receive definite information.<sup>1</sup>

Thus did the Bolsheviki reply to the revolutionary enthusiasm and deep faith which inspired the masses in the beginning of their great struggle for liberty and justice — a reply that expressed itself in the policy of compromise abroad and terrorism at home.

This policy proved fatal: it corrupted and disintegrated the Revolution, poisoned it, stayed its soul, destroyed its moral, spiritual significance. By its despotism; by stubborn, petty paternalism; by the perfidy which replaced its former revolutionary idealism; by its stifling formalism and criminal indifference to the interests and aspirations of the masses; by its cowardly suspicion and distrust of the people at large, the “dictatorship of the proletariat” hopelessly cut itself off from the laboring masses.

Thrust back from direct participation in the constructive work of the Revolution, harassed at every step, the victim of constant supervision and control by the Party, the proletariat is becoming accustomed to consider the Revolution and its further fortunes as the private, personal affair of the Bolsheviki. In vain does the Communist Party seek by ever new decrees to preserve its hold upon the country’s life. The people have seen through the rear meaning of the Party dictatorship. They know its narrow, selfish dogmatism, its cowardly opportunism; they are aware of its internal decay, its intrigues behind the scenes.

In the land where, after three years of tremendous effort, of terrible and heroic sacrifice, there should have come to bloom the wonder-flower of Communism, — alas, even its withered buds are killed in distrust, apathy, and enmity.

---

<sup>1</sup> This pamphlet was written in June, 1921, as mentioned in my Preface. Since then some of the Anarchists imprisoned in Moscow have been deported from Russia, though natives of that country; others have been exiled to distant parts, while a large number are still in the prisons. A. B.

Thus came about the era of revolutionary stagnation, of sterility, which cannot be cured by any political party methods, and which demonstrates the complete social atrophy.

The swamp of compromise into which Bolshevik dictatorship had sunk proved fatal to the Revolution: it became poisoned by its noxious miasma. In vain do the Bolsheviks point to the imperialistic world war as the cause of Russia's economic breakdown; in vain do they ascribe it to the blockade and the attacks of armed counter-revolution. Not in them is the real source of the collapse and débacle.

No blockade, no wars with foreign reaction could dismay or conquer the revolutionary people whose unexampled heroism, self-sacrifice and perseverance defeated all its external enemies. On the contrary, it is probable that civil war really helped the Bolsheviks. It served to keep alive popular enthusiasm and nurtured the hope that, with the end of war, the ruling Communist Party will make effective the new revolutionary principles and secure the people in the enjoyment of the fruits of the Revolution. The masses looked forward to the yearned — for opportunity for social and economic liberty. Paradoxical as it may sound, the Communist dictatorship had no better ally, in the sense of strengthening and prolonging its life, than the reactionary forces which fought against it.

It was only the termination of the wars which permitted a full view of the economic and psychologic demoralisation to which the blindly despotic policy of the dictatorship brought the revolutionary country. Then it became evident that the most formidable danger to the Revolution was not outside, but within the country: a danger resulting from the very nature of the social and economic arrangements which characterise the present "transitory stage".

We fully realise the gross error of the theoreticians of bourgeois political economy who wilfully ignore the study of [historical] evolution from the historico-social viewpoint, and stupidly confound the system of State capitalism with that of the socialist dictatorship. The Bolsheviks are quite right when they insist that the two types of socio-economic development are "diametrically opposed in their essential character." However, it were wrong and useless to pretend that such a form of industrial life as expressed in the present system of proletarian dictatorship is anything essentially different from State capitalism.

As a matter of fact, the proletarian dictatorship, as it actually exists, is in no sense different from State capitalism.

The distinctive characteristics of the latter — inherent social antagonisms — are abolished only formally in the Soviet Republic. In reality those antagonisms exist and are very deep-seated. The exploitation of labor, the enslavement of the worker and peasant, the cancellation of the citizen as a human being, as a personality, and his transformation into a microscopic part of the universal economic mechanism owned by the government; the creation of privileged groups favored by the State; the system of compulsory labor service and its punitive organs — such are the characteristic features of State capitalism.

All these features are also to be found in the present Russian system. It were unpardonable naïveté, or still more unpardonable hypocrisy, to pretend — as do Bolshevik theoreticians, especially Bukharin — that universal compulsory labor service in the system of the proletarian dictatorship is, in contradistinction to State capitalism, "the self-organisation of the masses for purposes of labor", or that the existing "mobilisation of industry is the strengthening of socialism", and that "State Coercion in the system of proletarian dictatorship is a means of building the Communist society".

A year ago Trotzky, at the Tenth Congress of the Communist Party of Russia, thundered against the “bourgeois notion” that compulsory labor is not productive. He sought to convince his audience that the main problem is to “draw the worker into the process of labor, not by external methods of coercion, but by means internal, psychological”. But when he approached the concrete application of this principle, he advocated a “very complex system, involving methods of an ethical nature, as well as premiums and *punishment*, in order to increase the productivity of labor in consonance with those principles of compulsion according to which we are constructing our whole economic life”.

The experiment was made, and it gave surprising results. Whether the old “bourgeois notion” proved correct, or the newest socialism was powerless “internally, psychologically compulsory” to “draw the worker into the process of production”, by means of premiums, punishment, etc., at any rate, the worker refused to be snared by the tempting formula of “psychologic coercion”. Evidently the ideology as well as the practice of Bolshevism convinced the toilers that the socio-economic ideals of the Bolsheviki are incidentally also a step forward in the more intensive exploitation of labor. For Bolshevism, far from saving the country from ruin and in no way improving the conditions of existence for the masses, is attempting to turn the serf of yesterday into a complete slave. How little the Communist State is concerned about the workers’ well-being is seen from the statement of a prominent Communist delegate to the Tenth Congress of the Party: “Up till now Soviet policy has been characterised by the complete absence of any plan to improve the living conditions of labor”. And further: “All that was done in that regard happened accidentally, or was done by fits and starts, by local authorities under pressure of the masses themselves”.

Is this, then, the system of proletarian dictatorship or State capitalism?

Chained to their work, deprived of the right to leave the job on pain of prison or summary execution for “labor desertion”; bossed and spied upon by Party overseers; divided into qualified sheep (artisans) and unqualified goats (laborers) receiving unequal food rations; hungry and insufficiently clad, deprived of the right to protest or strike — such are the modern proletarians of the Communist dictatorship. Is this “self — organisation” of the toiling masses not a step backward, a return to feudal serfdom or negro slavery? Is the hand of the Communist State executioner less ruthless than the whip of the plantation boss? Only scholasticism or blind fanaticism can see in this, the most grievous form of slavery, the emancipation of labor or even the least approach to it.

It is the height of tragedy that State Socialism, enmeshed in logical antitheses, could give to the world nothing better than the intensification of the evils of the very system whose antagonisms produced socialism.

The Party dictatorship applies the same policy, in every detail, also to the peasantry. Here, too, the State is the universal master. The same policy of compulsory labor service, of oppression, spying, and systematic expropriation of the fruits of the peasant’s toil: the former method of requisition which frequently stripped the peasants even of the necessaries of life; or the newly initiated, but no less predatory, food tax; the senseless, enormous waste of foodstuffs due to the cumbrous system of centralisation and the Bolshevik food policy; the dooming of whole peasant districts to slow starvation, disease and death; punitive expeditions, massacring peasant families by the wholesale and razing entire villages to the ground for the slightest resistance to the plundering policy of the Communist dictatorship — such are the methods of Bolshevik rule.

Thus, neither economic nor political exploitation of the industrial and agrarian proletariat has ceased. Only its forms have changed: formerly exploitation was purely capitalistic; now, labeled “workers’ and peasants’ government” and christened “communist economy”, it is State capitalistic.

But this modern system of State capitalism is pernicious not only because it degrades the living human into a soulless machine. It contains another, no less destructive, element. By its very nature this system is extremely aggressive. Far from abolishing militarism, in the narrow sense of the term, it applies the principle of militarisation — with all its attributes of mechanical discipline, irresponsible authority and repression — to every phase of human effort.

Socialist militarism is not only admitted, but defended and justified by the theoreticians of the Party. Thus Bukharin in his work on the “Economics of the Transition Period” writes: “The workers’ government, when waging war, seeks to broaden and strengthen the economic foundations on which it is built — that is, socialist forms of production. Incidentally, it is clear from this that, in principle, even an aggressive revolutionary socialist war is permissible”. And, indeed, we are already familiar with some imperialistic pretensions of the “workers” dictatorship.

Thus the “bourgeois prejudices” kicked out through the window re-enter through the door.

It is evident that the militarism of the “labor” dictatorship, like any other militarism, necessitates the formation of a gigantic army of non-producers. Moreover, such an army and all its various organs must be supplied with technical resources and means of existence, which puts additional burdens on the producers, that is, the workers and the peasants.

Another and the most momentous internal danger is the dictatorship itself. The dictatorship which, despotic and ruthless, has alienated itself from the laboring masses, has strangled initiative and liberty, suppressed the creative spirit of the very elements which bore the brunt of the Revolution, and is slowly but effectively instilling its poison in the hearts and minds of Russia.

Thus does the dictatorship itself sow counter-revolution. Not conspiracies from without, not the campaigns of the Denikins and Wrangels are the Damocles sword of Russia. The real and greatest danger is that country-wide disillusionment, resentment and hatred of Bolshevik despotism, that counter-revolutionary attitude of the people at large, which is the legitimate offspring of the Communist Party dictatorship itself.

Even in the ranks of the proletariat is ripening, with cumulative force, the protest against the reactionary “big stick” policy of Bolshevism.

\* \* \*

The organised labor movement of Russia developed immediately after the February Revolution. The formation of shop and factory committees was the first step toward actual control by labor of the activities of the capitalist owners. Such control, however, could not be general without coordinating the work of all other similar committees, and thus came to life Soviets, or General Councils, of shop and factory committees, and their All-Russian Congress.

In this manner the shop and factory committees (*zavkomy*) were the pioneers in labor control of industry, with the prospect of themselves, in the near future, managing the industries entire. The labor unions, on the other hand, were engaged in improving the living conditions and cultural environment of their membership.

But after the October Revolution the situation changed. The centralisation methods of the Bolshevik dictatorship penetrated also into the unions. The autonomy of the shop committees

was now declared superfluous. The labor unions were reorganised on industrial principles, with the shop committee emasculated into a mere “embryo” of the union, and entirely subjected to the authority of the central organs. Thus all independence of action, all initiative was torn from the hands of the workers themselves and transferred to the union bureaucracy. The result of this policy was the complete indifference of the workers to their unions and to the fate of the industries.

Then the Communist Party began to fill the labor unions with its own party members. *They occupied the union offices.* That was easily done because all the other political parties were outlawed and there existed no public press except the official Bolshevik publications. No wonder that within a short time the Communists proved an overwhelming majority in all the provincial and central executive committees, and had in their hands the exclusive management of the labor unions. They usurped the dominant role in every labor body, including even such organisations where the membership (as in the Union of Soviet Employees) is manifestly and most bitterly opposed to the Bolsheviks. Whenever an occasional union proved refractory, as the printers, for instance, and refused to yield to “internal psychologic persuasion”, the Communists solved the difficulty by the simple expedient of suspending the entire administration of the union.

Having gained control of the political machinery of the labor organisations, the Communist Party formed in every shop and factory small groups of its own members, so-called Communist “cells”, which became the practical masters of the situation. The Communist “cell” is vested with such powers that no action of the shop or factory committee (even if the latter consist of Communists) is valid unless sanctioned by the “cell”. The highest organ of the labor movement, the All-Russian Central Soviet of Labor Unions, is itself under the direct control of the Central Committee of the Communist Party.

Lenin and other Bolshevik leaders take the position that the labor union must be, first and foremost, a “school of Communism”. In practice the role of the labor union in Russia is reduced to that of an automatic agency for the execution of the orders of the ruling Party.

However, this state of affairs is becoming unbearable even to that labor element which is still faithful to the commandments of State Communism. In the ranks of the Communist Party itself there has developed an opposition movement against the military governmentalisation of the labor unions. This new movement, known as the Labor Opposition, though still loyal to its Communist parent, yet realises the full horror of the hopeless position, the “blind alley” into which the criminally stupid policies of the Bolsheviks have driven the Russian proletariat and the Revolution.

The Labor Opposition is characterised by the good orthodox Communist Kolontay as “the advance guard of the proletariat, class conscious and welded by the ties of class interests”, an element which “has not estranged itself from the rank and file of the working masses and has not become lost among Soviet office holders.” This Labor Opposition protests “against the bureaucratisation, against the differentiation between the ‘upper’ and the ‘lower’ people”, against the excesses of the Party hegemony, and against the shifting and twisting policy of the ruling central power. “The great creative and constructive power of the proletariat”, says the Labor Opposition, “cannot be replaced, in the task of building the Communist society, by the mere emblem of the dictatorship of the working class”, — of that dictatorship which a prominent Communist characterised at the last Congress of the Communist Party as “the dictatorship of the Party bureaucracy”.



Indeed, the Labor Opposition is justified in asking: "Are we, the proletariat, really the backbone of the working class dictatorship, or are we to be considered merely as a will-less herd, good enough only to carry on our backs some party politicians who are pretending to reconstruct the economic life of the country without our control, without our constructive class spirit?"

And this Labor Opposition, according to Kolontay, "keeps on growing in spite of the determined resistance on the part of the most influential leaders of the Party, and gains more and more adherents among the laboring masses throughout Russia".

But the Tenth Congress of the Communist Party of Russia (April, 1921) put its decisive veto on the Labor Opposition. Henceforth it is officially doomed, discussion of its ideas and principles forbidden because of "their Anarcho-syndicalist tendency", as Lenin expressed himself. The Communist Party declared war on the Labor Opposition. The Party Congress decided that "propagation of the principles of the Labor Opposition is incompatible with membership in the Communist Party". The demand to turn the management of the industries over to the proletariat was outlawed.

\* \* \*

The October Revolution was initiated with the great battle cry of the First International, "The emancipation of the workers must be accomplished by the workers themselves". Yet we saw that, when the period of constructive destruction had passed, when the foundations of Tsarism had been razed, and the bourgeois system abolished, the Communist Party thought itself sufficiently strong to take into its own hands the entire management of the country. It began the education of the workers in a spirit of strictest authoritarianism, and step by step the Soviet system became transformed into a bureaucratic, punitive police machine. Terrorism became its logical, inevitable handmaid.

General indifference and hatred, and complete social paralysis, were the result of the government course. An atmosphere of slavish submission, at once revolting and disgusting, pervades the whole country. It stifles alike the oppressed and the oppressors.

What boots it that the sober minded, compromise ready Lenin begins his every speech with the confession of the many and serious mistakes which have been made by the Party in power? No piling up of mistakes by the "ingenious opportunist", as Lunacharsky dubs Lenin, can dismay the champions of Bolshevism intoxicated with their Party's political dominion. The mistakes of their leaders become, in the interpretation of Communist theoreticians and publicists, "eminent necessity", and the convulsive attempts to correct them (the whole agrarian policy) are hailed as acts of the greatest wisdom, humanity and loyalty to Bolshevik principles.

In vain the impatient cry of Kolontay: "The fear of criticism, inherent in our system of bureaucracy, at times reaches the point of caricature". The Party Elders brand her a heretic for her pains, her pamphlet "The Labor Opposition" is prohibited, and Illitch himself (Lenin) "settles" her with a few sarcastic personal slurs. The syndicalist "peril" is supposedly removed.

Meanwhile the Opposition is growing, deepening, spreading throughout working Russia.

Indeed, what shall the impartial observer think of the peculiar picture presented by Bolshevik Russia? Numerous labor strikes, with scores of workers arrested and often summarily executed; peasant uprisings and revolts, continuous revolutionary insurrections in various parts of the country. Is it not a terribly tragic situation, a heinous absurdity? Is not the rebellion of workers and peasants, however lacking in class consciousness in some cases, actual war against the workers' and peasants' government — — the very government which is flesh of the flesh and blood

of the blood of themselves, which had been called to guard their interests, and whose existence should be possible only in so far as it corresponds to the needs and demands of the laboring masses?

The popular protests do not cease. The opposition movement grows, and in self-defense the Party must, from time to time, mollify the people, even at the sacrifice of its principles. But where it is impossible by a few sops to still the craving for bread and liberty, the hungry mouths are shut with bullet or bayonet, and the official press brands the protestants with the infamous name of “counter-revolutionists”, traitors against the “workers’ and peasants’ government”.

Then Russia, Bolshevik Russia, is quiet again — with the quietness of death.

The history of recent days is filled with grewsome illustrations of such “quiet”.

One of those illustrations is Kronstadt — Kronstadt, against which has been perpetrated the most awful crime of the Party dictatorship, a crime against the proletariat, against socialism, against the Revolution. A crime multiplied a hundredfold by the deliberate and perfidious lies spread by the Bolsheviki throughout the world.

Future history will deal adequately with this crying shame. Here we shall give but a brief sketch of the Kronstadt events.

In the month of February, 1921, the workers of four Petrograd factories went on strike. It had been an exceptionally hard winter for them: they and their families suffered from cold, hunger and exhaustion. They demanded an increase of their food rations, some fuel and clothing. Here and there was also voiced the demand for the Constituent Assembly and free trade. The strikers attempted a street demonstration, and the authorities ordered out the military against them, chiefly the “kursants”, the young Communists of the military training schools.

When the Kronstadt sailors learned what was happening in Petrograd, they expressed their solidarity with the strikers in their economic and revolutionary demands, but refused to support any call for the Constituent Assembly and free trade. On March 1, the sailors organised a mass-meeting in Kronstadt which was attended also by the Chairman of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee, Kalinin, (the presiding officer of the Republic of Russia), by the Commander of the Fortress of Kronstadt, Kuzmin, and by the Chairman of the Kronstadt Soviet, Vassilyev. The meeting, held with the knowledge and permission of the Executive Committee of the Kronstadt Soviet, passed resolutions approved by the sailors, the garrison and the citizen meeting of 16,000 persons. Kalinin, Kuzmin and Vassilyev spoke against the resolutions. The main points of the latter were: free speech and free press for the revolutionary parties; amnesty for imprisoned revolutionists; re-election of the Soviets by secret ballot and freedom from government interference during the electioneering campaign.

The Bolshevik authorities replied to the resolutions by beginning to remove from the city the food and ammunition supplies. The sailors prevented the attempt, closed the entrances to the city, and arrested some of the more obstreperous commissars. Kalinin was permitted to return to Petrograd.

No sooner did the Petrograd authorities learn of the Kronstadt resolutions, than they initiated a campaign of lies and libel. In spite of the fact that Zinoviev kept in constant telephonic communication with the presiding officer of the Kronstadt Soviet, and was assured by the latter that all was quiet in Kronstadt and that the sailors were busy only with preparations for the re-elections, the Petrograd radio station was kept hard at work sending messages to the world announcing a counter-revolutionary conspiracy and a white-guard uprising in Kronstadt. At the same time Zinoviev, Kalinin and their aids succeeded in persuading the Petrograd Soviet to pass a resolution

which was an ultimatum to Kronstadt to surrender immediately, on pain of complete annihilation in case of refusal.

A group of well-known and trusted revolutionists, then in Petrograd, realising the provocative character of such a policy, appealed to Zinoviev and to the Council of Defense, of which he was the President. They pointed out the un-revolutionary, reactionary nature of his policy and its great danger to the Revolution. The demands of Kronstadt were clearly set forth: they were against the Constituent Assembly, against free trade, and in favor of the Soviet form of government. But the people of Kronstadt, as they frankly stated in their bulletin, could no longer tolerate the despotism of the Party, and demanded the right to air their grievances and the re-establishment of free Soviets. "All power to the Soviets" was again their watch-word, as it had been that of the people and of the Bolsheviki in 1917. To resort to armed force against Kronstadt were the height of folly; indeed, a terrible crime. The only right and revolutionary solution lay in complying with the request of Kronstadt (wired by the sailors to Zinoviev, but not transmitted by him to the Soviet) for the selection of an impartial Commission to reach an amicable settlement.

But this appeal of the Petrograd group of revolutionaries was ignored. Many Communists clearly understood how maliciously reactionary was the government attitude toward Kronstadt, but slavishly debased and morally crippled by the jesuitism of the Party, they dared not speak and mutely participated in the crime .

On March 7<sup>th</sup> Trotzky began the bombardment of Kronstadt, and on the 17<sup>th</sup> the fortress and city were taken, after numerous fierce assaults involving terrific human sacrifice and treachery. Thus Kronstadt was "liquidated", and the "counter-revolutionary plot" quenched in blood. The "conquest" of the city was characterised by ruthless savagery to the defeated, although not a single one of the Communists arrested by the Kronstadt sailors had been injured or killed by them. And even before the storming of the fortress the Bolsheviki summarily executed numerous soldiers of the Red Army, whose revolutionary spirit and solidarity caused them to refuse to participate in the bloody bath.

The "conspiracy" and the "victory" were necessary for the Communist Party to save it from threatening inner decomposition. Trotzky, who during the discussion of the role of the Labor Unions (at the joint session of the Communist Party, the Central Executive Council of the Unions, and the delegates to the 6<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Soviets, December 30, 1920) was treated by Lenin as a bad boy who "don't know his Marx", once more proved himself the savior of the "country in danger". Harmony was re-established.

A few days after the "glorious conquest" of Kronstadt, Lenin said at the 10<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Communist Party of Russia: "The sailors did not want the counter-revolutionists but — they did not want us, either". And, — irony of the executioner! — at that very Congress Lenin advocated *free trade*, "as a respite".

On March 17<sup>th</sup> the Communist government celebrated its bloody victory over the Kronstadt proletariat, and on the 18<sup>th</sup> it commemorated the martyrs of the Paris Commune. As if it was not evident to all who had eyes and would see, that the crime committed against Kronstadt was far more terrible and enormous than the slaughter of the Commune in 1871, for it was done in the name of the Social Revolution, in the name of the Socialist Republic. Henceforth to the vile classic figures of Thiers and Gallifet are added those of Trotzky, Zinoviev, Dihbenko, Tukhachevsky.

\* \* \*

Thus is human sacrifice brought to the Moloch of Bolshevism, to the gigantic lie that is still growing and spreading throughout the world and enmeshing it in its network of ruin, falsehood and treachery. Nor is it only the liberty and lives of individual citizens which are sacrificed to this god of clay, nor even merely the well-being of the country: it is Socialist ideals and the fate of the Revolution which are being destroyed.

Long ago Bakunin wrote: "The whole power of the Russian Tsar is built upon a lie — a lie at home and it lie abroad: a colossal and artful system of lies never witnessed before, perhaps, in the whole history of man".

But now such a system exists. It is the system of State Communism. The revolutionary proletariat of the world must open their eyes to the real situation in Russia. They should learn to see to what a terrible abyss the ruling Bolshevik Party, by its blind and bloody dictatorship, has brought Russia and the Russian Revolution. Let the world proletariat give ear to the voices of true revolutionists, the voices of those whose object is not political party power, but the success of the Social Revolution, and to whom the Revolution is synonymous with human dignity, liberty and social regeneration.

May the proletariat of Europe and America, when the world revolution comes, choose a different road than the one followed by the Bolsheviki. The road of Bolshevism leads to the formation of a social régime with new class antagonisms and class distinctions; it leads to State capitalism, which only the blind fanatic can consider as a transition stage toward a free society in which all class differences are abolished.

State Communism, the contemporary Soviet government, is not and can never become the threshold of a free, voluntary, non-authoritarian Communist society, because the very essence and nature of governmental, compulsory Communism excludes such an evolution. Its consistent economic and political centralisation, its governmentalisation and bureaucratisation of every sphere of human activity and effort, its inevitable militarisation and degradation of the human spirit mechanically destroy every germ of new life and extinguish the stimuli of creative, constructive work.

It is the Communist Party dictatorship itself which most effectively hinders the further development and deepening of the Revolution.

The historic struggle of the laboring masses for liberty necessarily and unavoidably proceeds outside the sphere of governmental influence. The struggle against oppression — political, economic and social — against the exploitation of man by man, or of the individual by the government, is always simultaneously also a struggle against government as such. The political State, whatever its form, and constructive revolutionary effort are irreconcilable. They are mutually exclusive. Every revolution in the course of its development faces this alternative: to build freely, independent and despite of the government, or to choose government with all the limitation and stagnation it involves. The path of the Social Revolution, of the constructive self-reliance of the organised, conscious masses, is in the direction of non-government, that is, of Anarchy. Not the State, not government, but systematic and coordinated social reconstruction by the toilers is necessary for the upbuilding of the new, free society. Not the State and its police methods, but the solidaric cooperation of all working elements — the proletariat, the peasantry, the revolutionary intelligentsia mutually helping each other in their voluntary associations, will emancipate us from the State superstition and bridge the passage between the abolished old civilisation and Free Communism. Not by order of some central authority, but organically, from life itself, must grow up the closely-knit federation of the united industrial, agrarian, etc. associations; by the

workers themselves must it be organised and managed, and then — and only then — will the great aspiration of labor for social regeneration have a sound, firm foundation. Only such an organisation of the commonwealth will make room for the really free, creative, new humanity, and will be the actual threshold of nongovernmental, Anarchist Communism.

Thus, and only thus, can be completely swept away all the remnants of our old, dying civilisation, and the human mind and heart relieved of the varied poisons of ignorance and prejudice.

The revolutionary world proletariat must be permitted to hear this Anarchist voice, which cries to them — as of yore — from the depths, from the prison dungeons.

The world proletariat should understand the great tragedy of the toilers of Russia: the heart-breaking tragedy of the workers and peasants who bore the brunt of the Revolution and who find themselves now helpless in the iron clutch of an all-paralysing State. The world proletariat must, ere too late, loosen that stranglehold.

If not, then Soviet Russia, once the hearth of the Social Revolution of the world, will again become the world's haven of blackest reaction.

Moscow, June , 1921.

The Anarchist Library (Mirror)  
Anti-Copyright



Alexander Berkman  
Russian Revolution and the Communist Party  
1922

Retrieved on March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2009 from RevoltLib.com, retrieved on November 18,  
2020.[dwardmac.pitzer.edu]]

**[usa.anarchistlibraries.net](http://usa.anarchistlibraries.net)**