

# **Tenth Anniversary of the Russian Revolution**

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# 1

It is only a few months now to the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution. Great preparations are being made by the Communist Party and Government of Russia for the celebration of the important event. Numerous committees are at work to make the day the most memorable in the annals of Soviet Russia, and to demonstrate to the country and to the world at large the achievements of the first decade of Bolshevik rule.

There is no doubt that the October Revolution was the most significant social upheaval known in human history. It broke all the molds of established society — not merely political forms, as was the case in previous revolutions, but the very economic foundations that support human slavery and oppression.

The spiritual achievements of the Revolution are tremendous, their ultimate effects immeasurable. It sounded the liberation of a million-headed people that for centuries had been held in bondage. It opened vista of a new civilization of human dignity, brotherhood and freedom. And it lit the torch of hope an inspiration for all the people's of the world.

A decade is but a short span in the life of a country. It would be near-sighted and unfair to judge the potentialities of new Russia by her actual achievements within the last ten years. But the essential characteristics of Russian life since the Revolution may serve as an indication of the dominant spirit and tendencies of the country.

This is not the place for a detailed review of the first decade of Soviet Russia or even for an approximate estimate of her achievements during that period. It is the fundamental nature and trend of Russian development during the past ten years that are significant, and they are sufficient to clarify the present situation.

Is present-day Russia even in the smallest degree an approach to that purpose? Is it imaginably even on the road toward that end?

Is it enough to state the essential factors of Russian life today to supply the answer.

What are those fundamental factors? What are the essential features that characterize TODAY in Russia and prepare her for TOMORROW?

Politically: the most absolute despotism, the exclusive rule of an all-powerful political party that ruthlessly suppresses every symptom of disagreement and nonconformance.

Economically: capitalism, State and private, with all its attending attributes of exploitation, degradation and subjection of the toilers.

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Educationally: the apotheosis of the ruling political party, its leaders and the State as omniscient and infallible; the intensification of the spirit of authority and blind obedience; the cultivation of militarist discipline and party chauvinism; the rearing of fanatical subjects whose wills were crippled and minds warped by the elimination of all freedom of speech and the suppression of all but party doctrine and information.

Socially: a condition of terror, with the dominant political party as the sole arbiter of all action, thought and behavior; a regime that cultivates the basest qualities of men by rousing fear, insecurity, hypocrisy and debasement.

These are the vital elements of life under the Bolsheviki. What boots it that Russia has “succeeded” in inducing international capital to exploit her natural resources — and her workers at the same time? Was a great revolution, with all its inevitable bloodshed and suffering, necessary merely to advance Russian development along the lines of American industrialism? Was the Revolution fought to establish modern capitalism in Russia?

It is unspeakably indecent to celebrate these “achievements” of Bolshevik rule in the name of the October Revolution. It is the greatest crime against the spirit of liberty and humanity to rejoice in the betrayal of the Revolution by the Communist Party.

The anniversary of the Revolution can be celebrated only by a revival of the spirit that is now being crushed by the Bolshevik Government. It can be celebrated only by forswearing tyranny and terror, and by returning to the people the fruits of the Revolution: their liberties and self-determination. In short, by the Bolshevik masters getting of the people’s back.

The first step on this road is the absolute abolition of the system of suppression and persecution, and the immediate and unconditional liberation of the political prisoners.

Not a fake liberation of the men and women suffering for opinion’s sake, not an “administrative” liberation that will leave the prison doors open for their forced return under some new Tcheka pretext. But an actual liberation guaranteed by the elimination of the least semblance of political persecution.

Thus only can the great October Revolution be fittingly commemorated in spirit and in deed.

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Will that be done? Hardly. Certainly not till the Russian people themselves compel the Government to do so. Meanwhile thousands of politicals are rotting in the dungeons of Tcheka or drag out of their miserable existence in the hell-hole of Solovetsky Islands, in the prisons, concentration camps and exile in the most forsaken regions of the Arctic Zone of Northern Russia and Siberia.

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It would seem that it were sufficient merely to mention such a terrible state of affairs in an allegedly “revolutionary” country to rouse the indignation of every fair-minded man and woman, and to awaken the conscience of humanity to a liberating deed. But the cries of the victims tortured in Bolshevik prisons and “isolators” remain unheard. Their far-off voices are drowned in the triumphant clamor of the apologists for the terrorism and tyranny of Communist Fascism. Where is the George Kennan to light the torch of fearless truth in Darkest Russia of today?!

The political martyrs in Russia and Siberia need your moral as well as material aid. The “Relief Fund of the International Working Men’s Association” is exerting its utmost efforts to help. For that help we depend on you, friends and sympathizers, for without your active support of this worthy cause the imprisoned and exiled politicals in Russia would be doomed to perish from cold and hunger. The allowance that the exiled receive from the Bolshevik government is actually 5 times less than it was under the Romanov regime. In the Turukhen District, for instance (Northwestern Siberia) the politicals used to receive under the Czar 15 rubles per month for their support. Today they get only 6 rubles and 25 kopecks, while the purchasing value of the ruble is now almost 3 times less than it was in the pre-war days. The Czar was certainly none too

generous to the revolutionists. But today they are practically condemned to death from hunger. Consider then how vital is your help!

The summer is approaching and with it a very critical time in the work of relief. Because during the hot months activists in our movement usually fall off, as a result of which our fund receives but few contributions. We therefore suggest to the various Red Cross and Aid Societies, on whose cooperation we depend (such as those of New York, Chicago, Detroit, etc.), as well as to all our friends and comrades, to bear the situation in mind and to exert themselves to enable us to assist our prisoners and exiles in Russia during the summer. Picnics, entertainments and similar affairs would prove a source of income in behalf of the politicals.

Our Relief fund, which has two sections — one in Paris, the other in Berlin — is intended specially for the benefit of Anarchists and Anarcho- Syndicalists imprisoned or exiled in Russia. We make absolutely no distinction, giving aid to all imprisoned or exiled Anarchists in Russia, to whatever school or group they may belong. In cases where the contributor requests us to divide his donation among other political parties, his instructions are carried out, of course, as shown by the financial accounts in our BULLETIN. Comrade Emma Goldman, for instance, generally collects at her lectures for the political prisoners of all parties, and funds thus collected and received by us are divided according to the directions of the contributors, local groups, etc.

May those who read these lines take the urgent need of the situation to heart and remember the men and women suffering for their idealism in Russian prisons and exile.

Alexander Berkman  
For the Secretariat of the Relief Fund of the I.W.M.A.

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Address contributions to: A.Berkman, 120 Rue Tahere, St. Cloud (S.O.) France  
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