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THE
"ANTI-CLIMAX"

THE CONCLUDING CHAPTER
OF MY RUSSIAN DIARY
"THE BOLSHEVIK MYTH"

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IN EXPLANATION

My work on Russia, "THE BOLSHEVIK MYTH," which has just been issued by the publishing house of Boni & Liveright, New York, is an impersonal story of the Russian Revolution, a day by day record kept during my two years' stay in that country (January, 1920—December, 1921). It is a recital of actual events and experiences, without generalisations or theoretical deductions.

My subjective reactions and the lessons taught me by the Revolution I summarised in the Concluding Chapter. But Mr. Liveright rejected that chapter as an "anti-climax" from a literary standpoint and insisted on leaving it out.

Anxious to place my book before the public, I consented. But much as I am interested in literature, I consider the Russian Revolution and its lessons far more important than the finest writing. In a certain sense present-day Russia is indeed an anti-climax to the revolutionary aspirations of 1917. The more vital is the elucidation of the causes that led to the debacle of the Revolution. Those causes are discussed in the missing chapter. I have therefore published the latter in the present brochure, for the reader's better understanding of the "BOLSHEVIK MYTH" and — in justice to myself.

Berlin, January, 1925.

ALEXANDER BERKMAN

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PREFACE

Various circumstances have delayed the appearance of my work on Russia. But though it deals with conditions of two years ago, the book is as descriptive of Russia today as it was then.

"THE BOLSHEVIK MYTH" covers the period of military communism and the succeeding "nep" — the new economic policy introduced by Lenin in 1921. The "nep" has remained in force ever since, whatever the variations of its application, now hesitating, now energetically intensive. The so-called "nep" is nothing else than the introduction of capitalism in Russia, both State and private, involving concessions to foreign capitalists, the leasing of factories and even of entire industries to private individuals or corporations. In short, a new-fledged capitalism, a mixture of State monopoly and private business.

Excepting some minor changes, more apparent than real — much enthused over by certain Labor delegations and other naive visitors to Russia unfamiliar with the situation in that country — conditions there today are essentially as described in my work.

In outside appearance some of the larger cities, such as Petrograd and Moscow, are improved. The main thoroughfares have a cleaner look, some buildings have been repaired, the street car and electric service

is more satisfactory and dependable. Life is better regulated and has assumed more normal form in comparison with the entirely disorganised and chaotic conditions of 1920—1921.

But the actual, every-day existence of the people is not conditioned by these superficial changes, nor are the latter in any sense symbolic of the real essence and quality of the Bolshevik regime.

To understand the true being of a country one must look into its heart, into the unadorned channels of existence as fashioned by and mirrored in the political, economic, and cultural conditions.

In the realm of political life, the Communist dictatorship remains *in statu quo* of former years. As a matter of fact, the spirit of governmental despotism has become more intensive, more habitual, as it were, with the powers that be in Russia. It is more systematic and organised, though far less justified, than in 1919—1921. Then was the time of foreign invasion, of the blockade, and civil war. Solemnly did the Bolsheviks keep on promising in those days that the policy of terror and persecution would cease as soon as Russia would be safe from intervention and military attack. It was on the strength of those promises and hopes that the great Russian masses, as well as most of the revolutionary elements, continued to cooperate with the Soviet Government, hoping by united effort to save the Revolution from its external and internal enemies.

The time came when the foreign powers gave up their attempts of interference, the blockade was lifted, and the fronts were terminated with the final defeat

of the Wrangel armies. Civil war came to an end, but the Bolshevik policy of terror and suppression continued; aye, became even worse. Deceived in their expectations, the masses grew ever more embittered against the Communist Government. By degrees dissatisfaction became active in various parts of the country — in the East, the South, in Siberia — finally culminating in the Kronstadt uprising of the sailors, soldiers, and workers. Lenin saw himself forced to make concessions. He had the choice of giving the people either liberty or — capitalism. He chose the latter, and the “nep” was born.

The dictatorship of a small handful of Communist rulers — the inner circle of the Executive Committee of the Communist Party — remained. For the Bolsheviks feared to trust the people with liberty, because it might endanger their exclusive monopoly of the State. Lenin's motto and that of his Party was, “We'll concede anything except the least particle of our power.” The dictatorship now in the hands of the triumvirate (Stalin, Zinoviev, Kamenev) is as absolute as it was in the days of Lenin.

Indeed, it has become more comprehensive and systematic, due to the more normal and settled conditions of the country. The all-powerful hand of the dictatorship has now reached even to the heights of the Party, extinguishing Trotsky, stifling the Labor Group, and outlawing the entire left wing of the Communist Party of the Ukraine. Every sign of independent political opinion, every attempt at criticism is suppressed ruthlessly. The dreaded “inner” (special) Tcheka jails, the old prisons of

the Tsar and the new “houses of deprivation of liberty” are crowded. The frozen North of Siberia, the wilds of Turkestan, the Archangel and Solovetsky dungeons and concentration camps are holding thousands of politicals, of the *intelligentsia*, of workers arrested for daring to strike, of peasants protesting against the unbearable burdens, of non-partisans suspected of “political unreliability.” In the collection of Russian documents in my possession there are some issued by the Tcheka to prisoners, stating that they were arrested for “*belonging to the Zionist Socialist Party.*” The significance of such a “charge” is the more eloquent when it is considered that the Zionist Socialist Party demands nothing more “revolutionary” or “counter-revolutionary” than that the Soviet Constitution be respected in actual practice.

Still the Bolsheviks dare to pretend that only those are persecuted in Russia who take up arms against the Soviet Government or who are actively engaged in counter-revolutionary plots.

It is sufficient further to characterise the present situation in Russia by pointing out the fact that *not a single political publication is permitted to exist there*, excepting orthodox Communist papers and magazines. Even the possession of a revolutionary non-Communist publication, issued abroad, is punishable with imprisonment and exile.

It is a profound misconception of the situation to call Russia a dictatorship of the proletariat, for the workers are more enslaved politically and exploited in Russia than in any other country. Nor is the

dictatorship that of the Communist Party, for the rank and file of the latter are held in entire subservience to Kremlin as are the rest of the people. Russia is today, as in Lenin's time, a dictatorship of a small clique, known as the "political bureau" of the Executive Committee of the Party, with Stalin, Zinoviev, and Kamenev the actual and exclusive masters of the fate of the whole of Russia with her one hundred millions of population.

The policy of terror has completely suppressed every avenue of free expression. It has stifled the Soviets as the voice of the people's needs and aspirations. It has turned the labor organisations into Communist executive bureaus, submissively carrying out the orders of the Government.

In the social and cultural life of the country, as well as in the industrial and economic fields, the effect of the dictatorship is inevitable depression and stagnation. Modern industrial development cannot go hand in hand with absolute despotism. A certain modicum of liberty, of personal safety, and the right of exerting one's initiative and creative energies are the pre-requisites of economic improvement. Only a most radical change in the character of the Communist dictatorship — the abolition of the latter, in fact — can bring Russia out of the quagmire of tyranny and misery.

It is the height of tragedy that Bolshevism, enmeshed in logical antitheses, can give to the world today — seven years after the Revolution — nothing better than the intensification of the evils of the very system whose antagonisms produced Socialism.

THE LESSONS OF THE "BOLSHEVIK MYTH"

I. MY PERSONAL ATTITUDE AND REACTIONS

Since my early youth, revolution — social revolution — was the great hope and aim of my life. It signified to me the Messiah who was to deliver the world from brutality, injustice, and evil, and pave the way for a regenerated humanity of brotherhood, living in peace, liberty, and beauty.

Without exaggeration I may say that the happiest day of my existence was passed in a prison cell — the day when the first news of the October Revolution and the victory of the Bolsheviks reached me in the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary. The night of my dungeon was illumined by the glory of the great dream coming true. The bars of steel melted away, the stone walls receded, and I trod on the golden fleece of the Ideal about to be realised. Then followed weeks and months of trepidation, and I lived in a ferment of hope and fear — fear lest reaction overwhelm the Revolution, hope of reaching the land of promise.

At last arrived the longed-for day, and I was in Soviet Russia. I came exultant with the Revolution, full of admiration for the Bolsheviks, and flushed with the joy of useful work awaiting me in the midst of the heroic Russian people.

I knew that the Bolsheviks were Marxists, believers in a centralised State which I, an Anarchist, deny in principle. But I placed the Revolution above theories, and it seemed to me that the Bolsheviks did the same. Though Marxists, they had been instrumental in bringing about a revolution that was entirely un-Marxian; that was indeed in defiance of Marxian dogma and prophecy. Ardent advocates of parliamentarism, they repudiated it in their acts. Having persistently demanded the convocation of the Constituent Assembly, they unceremoniously dissolved it when life proved its inadequacy. They abandoned their agrarian policy to adopt that of the Social Revolutionists, in response to the needs of the peasantry. They resolutely applied Anarchist methods and tactics when the exigency of the situation demanded them. In short, the Bolsheviks appeared *in practice* a thoroughly revolutionary party whose sole aim was the success of the Revolution; a party possessing the moral courage and integrity to subordinate its theories to the common welfare.

Had not Lenin himself frequently asserted that he and his followers were ultimately Anarchists — that political power was to them but a temporary means of accomplishing the Revolution? The State was gradually to die off, to disappear, as Engels had taught, because its functions would become unnecessary and obsolete.

I therefore accepted the Bolsheviks as the sincere and intrepid vanguard of man's social emancipation. To work with them, to help in the fight against the

enemies of the Revolution, to aid in securing its fruits to the people was my fervent aspiration.

In that state of mind I came to Soviet Russia. As I had so passionately avowed at our first meeting of welcome on the Russian frontier, I came prepared to ignore all theoretic differences of opinion. I came to work, not to discuss. To learn, not to teach. To learn and to help.

I did learn, and I tried to help. I learned day by day, through the long weeks and months, in various parts of the country. But what I saw and learned was in such crying contrast with my hopes and expectations as to shake the very foundation of my faith in the Bolsheviks. Not that I expected to find Russia a proletarian Eldorado. By no means. I knew how great the travail of a revolutionary period, how stupendous the difficulties to be overcome. Russia was besieged on numerous fronts; there was counter-revolution within and without; the blockade was starving the country and denying even medical aid to sick women and children. The people were exhausted by long war and civil strife; industry was disorganised, the railroads broken down. I fully realised the dire situation, with Russia shedding her last blood on the altar of the Revolution, while the world at large stood by a supine witness and the Allied Powers aided death and destruction.

I saw the desperate heroism of the people and the almost superhuman efforts of the Bolsheviks. Closely associated with them, on terms of personal friendship with the leading Communists, I shared their interests and hopes, helped in their work, and

was inspired by their selfless devotion and entire absorption in the service of the Revolution. Lack of sympathy on the part of other revolutionary elements filled me with grief, even anger. I was impatient of criticism of the Bolsheviks at a time when they were beset by powerful enemies. Refusal of support I resented, condemned as criminal, and I exerted my utmost efforts to bring about better understanding and cooperation between the opposing revolutionary factions.

My closeness to the Bolsheviks, my frank partiality in their favor aggravated my friends and alienated my nearest comrades. But my faith in the Communists and their integrity would not be influenced. It was proof even against the evidence of my own senses and judgment, of my impressions and experience.

Life, reality continuously challenged my faith. I saw inequality and injustice on every hand, humanity trampled in the dust, alleged exigency made the cloak of treachery, deceit, and oppression. I saw the ruling Party suppress the vital impulses of the Revolution, discourage popular initiative and self-reliance so essential to its growth. Yet I clung to my faith. Tenaciously I nursed the hope that back of the wrong principles and false tactics, back of the Government bureaucracy and Party autocracy there smoldered the will to idealism that would sweep away the black clouds of despotism as soon as the Soviet Government would be safe from Allied interference and counter-revolution. That spark of idealism would excuse to me all the mistakes

and errors, the monstrous incompetency, the incredible corruption, even the crimes committed in the name of the Revolution.

For eighteen months, months of anguish and heartrending experience, I clung to that hope. And day by day the conviction kept growing that Bolshevism was proving fatal to the best interests of the Revolution; that political power had become the sole aim of the dominant Party; that the State with its barrack Communism was enslaving and destructive. I saw the Bolsheviks steadily gain momentum on the inclined plane of tyranny; the Party dictatorship become the irresponsible absolutism of a few overlords; the apostles of liberty turn executioners of the people.

Every day the damning evidence was accumulating. I saw the Bolsheviks reflect the Revolution as a monstrous grotesque; I saw tragic revolutionary necessity institutionalised into irresponsible terror, the blood of thousands shed without reason or measure. I saw the class struggle, long terminated, become a war of vengeance and extermination. I saw the ideals of yesterday betrayed, the meaning of the Revolution perverted, its essence caricatured into reaction. I saw the workers subdued, the whole country silenced by the Party dictatorship and its organised brutality. I saw entire villages laid waste by Bolshevik artillery. I saw the prisons filled — not with counter-revolutionists, but with workers and peasants, with proletarian intellectuals, with starving women and children. I saw the revolutionary elements persecuted, the spirit of

October crucified on the Golgotha of the omnipotent Communist State.

Still I would not concede the appalling truth. Still the hope persisted that the Bolsheviks, though absolutely wrong in principle and practice, yet grimly held on to *some* shreds of the revolutionary banner. "Allied interference," "the blockade and civil war," "the necessity of the transitory stage" — thus I sought to placate my outraged conscience. When the critical period will be past, the hand of despotism and terror would be lifted, and my sorely tried faith justified.

At last the fronts were liquidated, civil war ended, and the country at peace. But Communist policies did not change. On the contrary: more fanatical became repression, red terror grew to orgy, more ruthlessly the Juggernaut of the State spread death and devastation. The country groaned under the unbearable yoke of the Party dictatorship. But no relief would be given. Then came Kronstadt and its simultaneous echoes throughout the land. For years the people had suffered untold misery, privation, and hunger. For the sake of the Revolution they were still willing to bear and to suffer. Not for bread did they cry. Only for a breath of life, of liberty.

Kronstadt could have easily turned its guns against Petrograd and driven out the Bolshevik masters who were frightened and on the verge of flight. One decisive blow by the sailors, and Petrograd would have been theirs and with it Moscow. The entire country was ready to welcome the step. Never

before were the Bolsheviks nearer to destruction. But Kronstadt, like the rest of Russia, did not intend war on the Soviet Republic. It wanted no bloodshed, it would not fire the first shot. Kronstadt demanded only honest elections, Soviets free from Communist domination. It proclaimed the slogans of October and revived the true spirit of the Revolution.

Kronstadt was crushed as ruthlessly as Thiers and Gallifet slaughtered the Paris Communards. And with Kronstadt the entire country and its last hope. With it also my faith in the Bolsheviks. That day I broke finally, irrevocably, with the Communists. It became clear to me that never, under any circumstances, could I accept that degradation of human personality and liberty, that Party chauvinism and State absolutism which had become the essence of the Communist dictatorship. I realised at last that Bolshevik idealism was a MYTH, a dangerous delusion fatal to liberty and progress.

II. THE COMMUNIST DICTATORSHIP AND THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

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 production had made little progress. Russia was a country with a badly organised system of transportation, with an insignificant bourgeoisie and weak proletariat, but with a numerically strong and socially important peasant population. 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," Lenin justly wrote at the time, "to begin the revolution in the peculiarly unique situation of 1917."

The specially favorable conditions 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 chance of remaining, at least for a certain period, outside the sphere of influence of the capitalistic European groups which continued the 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 unusually favorable position of Russia, in case of 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 demands of the peasantry for land, 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 — that 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 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 repre-

sentatives of government and authority. In their grand revolutionary outburst they destroyed every form of political and economic oppression. In the depths of Russia the processes of the Social Revolution were intensively at work even before the October change took place in Petrograd and Moscow.

The Communist Party, aiming at the dictatorship, from the very beginning correctly judged the situation. Throwing overboard the democratic planks of its platform, it 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 Bolsheviks 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).

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. This attitude of the Bolsheviks was of tremendous psychologic effect in hastening and stimulating the Revolution.

The latter was an organic process that sprang with elemental force from the very needs of the people, from the complex combination of circumstances which determined their existence. The Revolution instinctively followed the path marked out by the great popular outburst, naturally reflecting Anarchist tendencies. It 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. In the field of economic reconstruction the Revolution established shop and factory committees for the management of production. House committees looked after the proper assignment of living quarters.

It was evident that the only right and wholesome development—which could save Russia from her external enemies, free her from inner strife, 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.

But this conception was in irreconcilable conflict with the spirit of Marxism in its Bolshevik interpretation and particularly with Lenin's authoritative view of it.

For years trained in their peculiar "underground" doctrine, in which fervent faith in the Social Revolution was in some strange manner united with their no less fanatical faith in State centralisation, the Bolsheviks devised an entirely new system of tactics. It was 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.

The fundamental characteristic of Bolshevik psychology is distrust of the masses. Left to themselves, the people—according to the Bolsheviks—can rise only to the consciousness of the petty reformer. The masses must be made free by force. To educate them to liberty one must not hesitate to use compulsion and violence. The road that leads to liberty was therefore forsaken.

"Proletarian compulsion in all its forms," as Bukharin, one of the foremost Communist theoreticians wrote, "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."

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 everyone is an open book to It. There is only *one* indisputable source of truth—the State. But the Communist State is, in essence and practice, the dictatorship of its Central Committee. Every citizen must be, first and foremost, the servant of the State, its obedient functionary, unquestioningly executing the will of his master.

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.

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

Having paralyzed 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 did it substitute in place of the revolutionary enthusiasm which burned so intensely before?

Two things comprised the beginning and the end of the constructive activities of the Bolshevik dictatorship: 1) the theory of the Communist State, and 2) terrorism.

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In his speeches about the Communist program, in discussions at conferences and congresses, and in his celebrated pamphlet on the "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.

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

The Brest Litovsk peace; the agrarian policy with its spasmodic changes from the poorest class of the peasantry to the peasant exploiter; the perplexed attitude toward 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 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 consciously ignores and even denies, on principle, what its right hand is doing; when, for instance, it is proclaimed 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 techno-economic 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 loudly that dictatorship may boast about the great success of its 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.

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 Bolsheviki adopted this maxim not only as their socio-political axiom during the "transition period," but gave it universal application.

Terrorism has always been 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 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 war against all 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.

That was the Bolshevik 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.

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 became accustomed to consider the Revolution and its further fortunes as the personal affair of the Communists. In vain did the Bolsheviks point to the world war as the cause of Russia's economic breakdown; in vain did they ascribe it to the blockade and the attacks of armed counter-revolution. Not in them was the real source of the collapse and debacle.

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, 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 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 Russia. 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 system of Bolshevism.

Its distinctive features — 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 labor service and its punitive organs — these are the characteristics of Bolshevism.

Bolshevism, with its Party dictatorship and State Communism, is not and can never become the threshold of a free, non-authoritarian Communist society, because the very essence and nature of governmental, compulsory Communism excludes

such an evolution. Its economic and political centralisation, its governmentalisation and bureaucratisation of every sphere of 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.

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, independently 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 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, and other associations; by the workers themselves must they 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 non-governmental, Anarchist Communism.

We live on the eve of tremendous social changes. The old forms of life are breaking and falling apart. New elements are coming into being, seeking adequate expression. The pillars of present-day civilisation are being shattered. The principles of private ownership, the conception of human personality, of social life and liberty are being transvalued. Bolshevism came to the world as the revolutionary symbol, the promise of the better day. To millions of the disinherited and enslaved it became the new religion, the beacon of social salvation. But Bolshevism has failed, utterly and absolutely. As Christianity, once the hope of the submerged, has driven Christ and his spirit from the Church, so has Bolshevism crucified the Russian Revolution, betrayed the people, and is now seeking to dupe other millions with its Judas kiss.

It is imperative to unmask the great delusion, which otherwise might lead the Western workers to the same abyss as their brothers in Russia. It is incumbent upon those who have seen through the myth to expose its true nature, to unveil the social menace that hides behind it—the red Jesuitism that would throw the world back to the dark ages and the Inquisition.

Bolshevism is of the past. The future belongs to man and his liberty.

THE END

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