

A Socialist View of Bolshevik Policy

Where We Stand

Ever since the Bolshevik minority seized the control of affairs in Russia we have been told that their "success" had completely changed Socialist policy. These "Communists" declare that the policy of Marx and Engels is out of date. Lenin and Trotsky are worshipped as the pathfinders of a shorter and easier road to Communism.

Unfortunately for these "Bolsheviks," no evidence has yet been supplied to show wherein the policy of Marx and Engels is no longer useful, and until that evidence comes the Socialist Party of Great Britain will continue to advocate the same Marxian policy as before. We will continue to expose and oppose the present system and all its defenders and apologists. We shall insist upon the necessity of the working class understanding Socialism and organising with a political party to obtain it.

Socialism Far Off in Russia

When we are told that Socialism has been obtained in Russia without the long, hard and tedious work of educating the mass of workers in Socialism we not only deny it but refer our critics to Lenin's own confessions. His statements prove that even though a vigorous and small minority may be able to seize power for a time, they can only hold it by modifying their plans to suit the ignorant majority. The minority in power in an economically backward country are forced to adapt their program to the undeveloped conditions and make continual concessions to the capitalist world around them. Offers to pay war debts to the Allies, to establish a Constituent Assembly, to compensate capitalists for losses, to cease propaganda in other countries, and to grant exploitation rights throughout Russia to the Western capitalists all show how far along the capitalist road they have had to travel and how badly they need the economic help of other countries. It shows above all that their loud and defiant challenge to the capitalist world has been silenced by their own internal and external weaknesses as we have so often predicted in these pages.

Lenin's Confessions

The folly of adopting Bolshevik methods here is admitted by Lenin in his pamphlet *The Chief Tasks of Our Times* (p. 10). "A backward country can revolt quicker, because its opponent is rotten to the core, its middle class is not organised; but in order to continue the revolution a backward country will require immediately more circumspection, prudence, and endurance. In Western Europe it will be quite different; there it is much more difficult to begin, but it will be much easier to go on. This cannot be otherwise because there the proletariat is better organised and more closely united."

Those who say "Russia can fight the world", are answered by Lenin:

"Only a madman can imagine that the task of dethroning International Imperialism can be fulfilled by Russia alone."

Lenin admits that "France and England have been learning for centuries what we have only learnt since 1905. Every class-conscious worker knows that the revolution grows but slowly amongst the free institutions of a united bourgeoisie, and that we shall only

be able to fight against such forces when we are able to do so in conjunction with the revolutionary proletariat of Germany, France, and England. Till then, sad and contrary to revolutionary traditions as it may be, our only possible policy is to wait, to tack, and to retreat."

State Capitalism for Russia

We have often stated that because of a large anti-Socialist peasantry and vast untrained population, Russia was a long way from Socialism. Lenin has now to admit this by saying: "Reality says that State Capitalism would be a step forward for us; if we were able to bring about State Capitalism in a short time it would be a victory for us. How could they be so blind as not to see that our enemy is the small capitalist, the small owner? How could they see the chief enemy in State Capitalism? In the transition period from Capitalism to Socialism our chief enemy is the small bourgeoisie, with its economic customs, habits and position" (p. 11).

This reply of Lenin to the Communists of the Left (Bucharin and others) contains the further statement that, "To bring about State Capitalism at the present time means to establish the control and order formerly achieved by the propertied classes. We have in Germany an example of State Capitalism, and we know she proved our superior. If you would only give a little thought to what the security of such State Socialism would mean in Russia, a Soviet Russia, you would recognise that only madmen whose heads are full of formulas and doctrines can deny that State Socialism is our salvation. If we possessed it in Russia the transition to complete Socialism would be easy, because State Socialism is centralisation control, socialisation—in fact, everything that we lack. The greatest menace to us is the small bourgeoisie, which, owing to the history and economics of Russia, is the best organised class, and which prevents us from taking the step, on which depends the success of Socialism."

Here we have plain admissions of the unripeness of the great mass of Russian people for Socialism and the small scale of Russian production.

If we are to copy Bolshevik policy in other countries we should have to demand State Capitalism, which is not a step to Socialism in advanced capitalist countries. The fact remains, as Lenin is driven to confess, that we do not have to learn from Russia, but Russia has to learn from lands where large scale production is dominant.

Lenin and the Trusts

"My statement that in order to properly understand one's task one should learn socialism from the promoters of Trusts aroused the indignation of the Communists of the Left. Yes, we do not want to teach the Trusts; on the contrary, we want to learn from them." (p. 12) Thus Lenin speaks to his critics. Owing to the untrained character of the workers and their failure to grasp the necessity of discipline and order in large scale production, Lenin has to employ "capitalist" experts to run the factories. He tells us: "We know all about Socialism, but we do not know how to organise on a large scale, how to manage distribution, and so on. The old Bolshevik leaders have not taught us these things, and this is not to the credit of our party. We have yet to go through this course and we say: Even if a man is a scoundrel of the deepest dye, if he is a merchant, experienced in organising production and distribution on a large scale, we must learn from him; if we do not learn from these people we shall never achieve Socialism, and the revolution will never get beyond the present stage. Socialism can

only be reached by the development of State Capitalism the careful organisation of finance, control and discipline among the workers. Without this there is no Socialism." (p. 12.)

That Socialism can only be reached through State Capitalism is untrue. Socialism depends upon large-scale production, whether organised by Trusts or Governments. State capitalism may be the method used in Russia, but only because the Bolshevik Government find their theories of doing without capitalist development unworkable—hence they are forced to retreat along the capitalist road.

The Internal Conflict

Lenin goes on: "The workers who base their activities on the principles of State Socialism are the most successful. It is so in the tanning, textile, and sugar industries, where the workers, knowing their industry, and wishing to preserve and to develop it, recognise with proletarian common sense that they are unable at present to cope with such a task, and therefore allot one third of the places to the capitalists in order to learn from them."

This concession is another example of the conflict between Bolshevik theory and practice, for the very argument of Lenin against Kautsky and others was that in Russia they could go right ahead without needing the capitalist development such as it exists in other countries.

The whole speech of Lenin is directed against the growing body of workers in Russia who took Lenin at his word. These people fondly imagined that after throwing over Kerensky they could usher in freedom and ignore the capitalist world around them. They thought that factory discipline, Socialist education, and intelligent skilled supervision were simply pedantic ideas.

A further quotation from Lenin will make this clear: "Naturally the difficulties of organisation are enormous, but I do not see the least reason for despair and despondency in the fact that the Russian Revolution, having first solved the easier task—the overthrow of the landowners and the bourgeoisie, is now faced with the more difficult Socialist task of organising national finance and control, a task which is the initial stage of Socialism, and is inevitable, as is fully understood by the majority of class-conscious workers."

He also says: "It is time to remonstrate when some people have worked themselves up to a state in which they consider the introduction of discipline into the ranks of the workers as a step backwards." And he points out that "by the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and landowners we have cleared the way, we have not erected the structure of Socialism."

How far they have cleared the capitalists out of the way is uncertain, as they are a long way from self-reliance. The long road ahead is admitted by Lenin in these words: "Until the workers have learned to organise on a large scale they are not Socialists, nor builders of a Socialist structure of society, and will not acquire the necessary knowledge for the establishment of the new world order. The path of organisation is a long one, and the tasks of Socialist constructive work require strenuous and continuous effort, with a corresponding knowledge which we do not sufficiently

possess. It is hardly to be expected that the even more developed following generation will accomplish a complete transition into Socialism." (p. 13.)

The Rule of the Minority

The denunciation of democracy by the Bolshevik leaders is quite understandable if we realise that only the minority in Russia are Communists. Lenin therefore denies control of affairs to the majority, but he cannot escape from the compromise involved in ruling with a minority. Not only is control of Russian affairs out of the hands of the Soviets as a whole, but not even all the members of the Communist Party are allowed to vote. Zinoviev, a leading Commissar, in his report to the First Congress of the Third International said:

"Our Central Committee has decided to deprive certain categories of party *members* of the right to vote at the Congress of the party. Certainly it is unheard of to limit the right voting within the party, but the *entire party has approved* this measure, which is to assure the homogenous unity of the Communists So that in fact, we have 500,000 members who manage the entire State machine from top to bottom." (*The Socialist*, 29.4.20. Italics not ours.)

So half a million members of the Communist Party (counting even those who are refused a vote within the party) control a society of 180 million members. It is quite plain why other parties' papers were suppressed: obviously they could influence the great majority outside the Communist Party. The maintenance of power was assured by the Bolshevik minority through its control of political power and the armed forces.

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