

Soviet Russia—1920

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I. THE PROBLEM

THE attempt to form anything like a judicial estimate of the Bolsheviki is beset with difficulties. To begin with, one approaches them through a mist of myth and melodrama; their friends and their foes alike deal only in superlatives, treating them as angels or devils, not as ordinary human beings. But even when one has come to know their regime, one has still a difficult work of analysis to perform before one can arrive at what is specifically bolshevist. Much in their methods is merely Russian, and does not distinguish them from their compatriots of other parties. It is difficult to exaggerate the difference between a Russian and an Englishman. I am convinced that there is far more resemblance between Mr. Smillie and Mr. Winston Churchill than between the former and Lenin or the latter and Kolchak. If one is to judge of the Bolsheviki one must judge them in relation to the Russian people and the possible alternative governments of Russia. It is only in their international propaganda that the comparison of their ideas with those of Western Europe becomes decisive.

There is another point which is very necessary to remember in estimating what one sees. Russia was one of the nations that suffered defeat in the war; it is, therefore, more just to compare the state of affairs with what exists in Germany or Austria than with what exists in England or America. In both these respects I felt myself very inadequately equipped. I did not know Russia before the Revolution, and I have not seen Germany or Austria since the war. I hope, however, that the mere realization of the problem has helped me to avoid errors to which, as it seems to me, many English observers in Russia have been prone.

Before entering Russia, I had read a great deal of what has been written about bolshevism, both in praise and in blame; nevertheless I found both the theory and the practice of the Soviet Government very different from what I had expected. In order that the reader may know how much weight to attach to my impressions, it will be well to begin with the circumstances of my journey.

I entered Soviet Russia on May 11 and recrossed the frontier on June 16. The Russian authorities admitted me only on the express condition that I should travel with the British labor delegation, a condition with which I was naturally very willing to comply, and which that delegation kindly allowed me to fulfil. We were conveyed from the frontier to Petrograd, as well as on subsequent journeys, in a special train de luxe covered with mottoes about the social revolution and the proletariat of all countries; we were received everywhere by regiments of soldiers, with the Internationale being played on the regimental band while civilians stood bareheaded and soldiers at the salute; congratulatory orations were made by local leaders and answered by prominent communists who accompanied us; the entrances to the carriages were guarded by magnificent Bashkir cavalymen in resplendent uniforms; in short, everything was done to make us feel like the Prince of Wales. Innumerable functions were arranged for us: banquets, public meetings, and military reviews.

The assumption was that we had come to testify to the

solidarity of British labor with Russian communism, and on that assumption the utmost possible use was made of us for bolshevist propaganda. We, on the other hand, desired to ascertain what we could of Russian conditions and Russian methods of government, which was impossible in the atmosphere of a royal progress. Hence arose an amicable contest, degenerating at times into a game of hide and seek: while they assured us how splendid the banquet or parade was going to be, we tried to explain how much we should prefer a quiet walk in the streets. I, not being a member of the delegation, felt less obligation than my companions did to attend propaganda meetings where one knew the speeches by heart beforehand. In this way I was able, by the help of neutral interpreters, mostly English or American, to have many conversations with casual people whom I met in the streets or on village greens, and to find out how the whole system appears to the ordinary non-political man and woman. The first five days we spent in Petrograd, the next eleven in Moscow. During this time we were living in daily contact with important men in the Government, so that we learned the official point of view without difficulty. I saw also what I could of the intellectuals in both places. We were all allowed complete freedom to see politicians of opposition parties, and we naturally made full use of this freedom. We saw Mensheviks, Social Revolutionaries of different groups, and Anarchists; we saw them without the presence of any Bolsheviki, and they spoke freely after they had overcome their initial fears. I had an hour's talk with Lenin, virtually *tete-a-tete*; I met Trotsky, though only in company; I spent a night in the country with Kamenev; and I saw a great deal of other men who, though less known outside Russia, are of considerable importance in the Government.

At the end of our time in Moscow, we all felt a desire to see something of the country, and to get in touch with the peasants, since they form about 85 per cent of the population. The Government showed the greatest kindness in meeting our wishes, and it was decided that we should travel down the Volga from Nijni Novgorod to Saratov, stopping at many places, large and small, and talking freely with the inhabitants. I found this part of the time extraordinarily instructive. I learned to know more than I should have thought possible of the life and outlook of peasants, village schoolmasters, small Jewish traders, and all kinds of people. Unfortunately my friend, Clifford Allen, fell ill, and my time was much taken up with him. This had, however, one good result, namely, that I was able to go on with the boat to Astrakhan, as he was too ill to be moved off it. This not only gave me further knowledge of the country, but made me acquainted with Sverdlov, Acting Minister of Transport, who was traveling on the boat to organize the movement of oil from Baku up the Volga, and who was one of the ablest as well as kindest people whom I met in Russia.

There are a few historical facts which ought to be borne in mind. The Kerensky regime, which attempted to introduce freedom as we understand it, led to chaos and a general cessation of work; some sterner discipline was obviously necessary if the country was to be saved from

utter destruction. Moreover, Kerensky was equally incapable of waging war and of making peace. He could not wage war because he could not preserve discipline, and he could not make peace because he was dependent upon the Allies. The Bolsheviki, who were, as Lenin himself told me, still very unpopular so late as July, 1917, acquired support quickly in the following months because they were the only people who seemed able and willing to give land to the peasants and peace to the country. At first, after the October Revolution, they were allied with the Left Social Revolutionaries, who, however, broke with them on the question of the Brest-Litovsk peace. The Left Social Revolutionaries took, and apparently still take, the position that Soviet Russia ought not, as a matter of principle, to make peace with any country that has not accomplished the social revolution; on this ground they have opposed the willingness of the Government to make peace with the Entente. English opinion goes astray through its obstinate determination to classify Russians as pro-German or pro-Entente. Because of Brest-Litovsk it falsely imagined that the Bolsheviki were pro-German. One might as well consider the Germans pro-Entente because of the Treaty of Versailles. The Russians were beaten, and only those who refused to face facts imagined it possible to continue the war. These same people, in the same spirit, protested later against attempts to make peace with the Entente.

The Bolsheviki found themselves compelled to take severe measures against the Social Revolutionaries of the Right because they joined Kolchak, and of the Left because they killed Mirbach. Since that time, opposition political parties have been illegal, with the exception of the Mensheviki. Even they were illegal for a short time, when one of their Central Committee (so at least the Bolsheviki assert) joined Denikin's cabinet. But they are now tolerated, and some of them are members of the Moscow Soviet.

After the Bolsheviki had made peace with Germany and given land to the peasants, they lost their popularity; for in Russia, as elsewhere, parties are popular on account of what they promise for the future, not on account of their performance in the past. It became clear that they could not give real peace, and that they would be compelled to remilitarize the country. They antagonized the peasants by the roughness of their methods of obtaining food for the towns, which seemed unavoidable so long as they had nothing but paper to offer in exchange for agricultural produce. Unpopularity drove them to greater repression and centralization, while the imperative need of production led them to adopt severe methods of industrial conscription. All this has produced an atmosphere which is disagreeable to a lover of freedom; but it has to be remembered that the lack of freedom is traceable to war and the blockade as its prime cause. Nothing but peace and a sufficient supply of manufactured goods can relieve the pressure from which the present evils result.

II. BOLSHEVIST THEORY

One of the first things that I discovered after passing the red flag which marks the frontier of Soviet Russia, amid a desolate region of marsh, pine wood, and barbed wire entanglements, was the profound difference between the theories of actual Bolsheviki and the version of those theories current among advanced Socialists in this country. Friends of Russia here think of the dictatorship of the

proletariat as merely a new form of representative government, in which only working men and women have votes and the constituencies are partly occupational, not geographical. They think that "proletariat" means "proletariat," but "dictatorship" does not quite mean "dictatorship." This is the opposite of the truth. When a Russian Communist speaks of dictatorship, he means the word literally, but when he speaks of the proletariat, he uses the word in a Pickwickian sense. He means the "class-conscious" part of the proletariat, *i.e.*, the Communist Party. He includes people by no means proletarian (such as Lenin and Chicherin) who have the right opinions, and he excludes such wage-earners as have not the right opinions, whom he classifies as lackeys of the bourgeoisie. The Communist who sincerely believes the party creed is convinced that private property is the root of all evil; he is so certain of this that he shrinks from no measures, however harsh, which seem necessary for constructing and preserving the communist state. He spares himself as little as he spares others. He works sixteen hours a day, and foregoes his Saturday half-holiday. He volunteers for any difficult or dangerous work which needs to be done, such as clearing away piles of infected corpses left by Kolchak or Denikin. In spite of his position of power and his control of supplies, he lives an austere life. He is not pursuing personal ends, but aiming at the creation of a new social order. The same motives, however, which make him austere make him also ruthless. Marx has taught that communism is fatally predestined to come about; this fits in with the Oriental traits in the Russian character, and produces a state of mind not unlike that of the early successors of Mahomet. Opposition is crushed without mercy, and without shrinking from the methods of the Czarist police, many of whom are still employed at their old work. Since all evils are due to private property, the evils of the bolshevist regime, while it has to fight private property, will automatically cease as soon as it has succeeded.

These views are the familiar consequences of fanatical belief. To an English mind they reinforce the conviction upon which English life has been based ever since 1688, that kindness and tolerance are worth all the creeds in the world—a view which, it is true, we do not apply to other nations or to subject races.

In a very novel society, it is natural to seek for historical parallels. The baser side of the present Russian Government is most nearly paralleled by the Directory in France, but on its better side it is closely analogous to the rule of Cromwell. The sincere Communists (and all the older members of the party have proved their sincerity by years of persecution) are not unlike the Puritan soldiers in their stern politico-moral purpose. Cromwell's dealings with Parliament are not unlike Lenin's with the Constituent Assembly. Both, starting from a combination of democracy and religious faith, were driven to sacrifice democracy to religion enforced by military dictatorship. Both tried to compel their countries to live at a higher level of morality and effort than the population found tolerable. Life in modern Russia, as in Puritan England, is in many ways contrary to instinct. And if the Bolsheviki ultimately fall, it will be for the reason for which the Puritans fell—because there comes a point at which men feel that amusement and ease are worth more than all other goods put together.

Far closer than any actual historical parallel is the parallel of Plato's Republic. The Communist Party corresponds to

the guardians; the soldiers have about the same status in both; there is in Russia an attempt to deal with family life more or less as Plato suggested. I suppose it may be assumed that every teacher of Plato throughout the world abhors bolshevism, and that every Bolsheviki regards Plato as an antiquated bourgeois. Nevertheless, the parallel is extraordinarily exact between Plato's Republic and the regime which the better Bolsheviki are endeavoring to create.

Bolshevism is internally aristocratic and externally militant. The Communists have all the good and bad traits of an aristocracy which is young and vital. They are courageous, energetic, capable of command, always ready to serve the state; on the other hand they are dictatorial, lacking in ordinary consideration for the plebs, such as their servants, whom they overwork, or the people in the streets, whose lives they endanger by extraordinarily reckless motor-ing. They are practically the sole possessors of power, and they enjoy innumerable advantages in consequence. Most of them, though far from luxurious, have better food than other people. Only people of some political importance can obtain motor-cars or telephones. Permits for railway journeys, for making purchases at the Soviet stores (where prices are about one-fiftieth of what they are in the market), for going to the theater, and so on, are of course easier to obtain for the friends of those in power than for ordinary mortals. In a thousand ways the Communists have a life which is happier than that of the rest of the community. Above all, they are less exposed to the unwelcome attentions of the police and the extraordinary commission.

The communist theory of international affairs is exceedingly simple. The revolution foretold by Marx, which is to abolish capitalism throughout the world, happened to begin in Russia, though Marxian theory would seem to demand that it should begin in America. In countries where the revolution has not yet broken out, the sole duty of a communist is to hasten its advent. Agreements with capitalist states can only be makeshifts, and can never amount on either side to a sincere peace. No real good can come to any country without a bloody revolution: English labor men may fancy that a peaceful evolution is possible, but they will find their mistake. Lenin told me that he hopes to see a labor government in England, and would wish his supporters to work for it, but solely in order that the futility of Parliamentarism may be conclusively demonstrated to the British working man. Nothing will do any real good except the arming of the proletariat and the disarming of the bourgeoisie. Those who preach anything else are social traitors or deluded fools.

For my part, after weighing this theory carefully, and after admitting the whole of its indictment of bourgeois capitalism, I find myself definitely and strongly opposed to it. The Third Internationale is an organization which exists to promote the class war and to hasten the advent of revolution everywhere. My objection is not that capitalism is less bad than the Bolsheviki believe, but that socialism is less good, at any rate in the form which can be brought about by war. The evils of war, especially of civil war, are certain and very great; the gains to be achieved by victory are problematical. In the course of a desperate struggle the heritage of civilization is likely to be lost, while hatred, suspicion, and cruelty become normal in the relations of human beings. In order to succeed in war a concentration

of power is necessary, and from concentration of power the very same evils flow as from the capitalist concentration of wealth. For these reasons chiefly I cannot support any movement which aims at world revolution. The injury to civilization done by revolution in one country may be repaired by the influence of another in which there has been no revolution; but in a universal cataclysm civilization might go under for a thousand years. But while I cannot advocate world revolution, I cannot escape from the conclusion that the Governments of the leading capitalist countries are doing everything to bring it about. Abuse of our power against Germany, Russia, and India (to say nothing of any other countries) may well bring about our downfall, and produce those very evils which the enemies of bolshevism most dread.

The true communist is thoroughly international. Lenin, for example, so far as I could judge, is not more concerned with the interests of Russia than with those of other countries; Russia is, at the moment, the protagonist of the social revolution, and as such valuable to the world, but Lenin would sacrifice Russia rather than the revolution if the alternative should ever arise. This is the orthodox attitude, and is no doubt genuine in many of the leaders. But nationalism is natural and instinctive; through pride in the revolution it grows again even in the breasts of communists. Through the Polish war, the Bolsheviki have acquired the support of national feeling and their position in the country has been immensely strengthened.

The only time I saw Trotzky was at the opera in Moscow. The British labor delegation were occupying what had been the Czar's box. After speaking with us in the ante-chamber, he stepped to the front of the box and stood with folded arms while the house cheered itself hoarse. Then he spoke a few sentences, short and sharp, with military precision, winding up by calling for "three cheers for our brave fellows at the front," to which the audience responded as a London audience would have responded in the autumn of 1914. Trotzky and the Red Army undoubtedly now have behind them a great body of nationalist sentiment. The reconquest of Asiatic Russia has even revived what is essentially an imperialist way of feeling, though this would be indignantly repudiated by many of those in whom I seemed to detect it. Experience of power is inevitably altering communist theories, and men who control a vast governmental machine can hardly have quite the same outlook on life as they had when they were hunted fugitives. If the Bolsheviki remain in power, it may be assumed that their communism will fade, and that they will increasingly resemble any other Asiatic government—for example, our own government in India.

III. COMMUNISM AND THE SOVIET CONSTITUTION

Before I went to Russia, I imagined that I was going to see an interesting experiment in a new form of representative government. Everyone who is interested in bolshevism knows the series of elections, from the village meeting to the All-Russian Soviet, by which the people's commissaries are supposed to derive their power. We were told that, by the recall, the occupational constituencies, and so on, a new and far more perfect machinery had been devised for ascertaining and registering the popular will. One of the things we hoped to study was the question whether the Soviet system is really superior to parliamentarism in this respect.

We were not able to make any such study because the

Soviet system is moribund. No conceivable system of free election would give majorities to the Communists, in either town or country. Various methods are therefore adopted for giving the victory to government candidates. In the first place, the voting is by show of hands, so that all who vote against the government are marked men. In the second place, no candidate who is not a Communist can have any printing done, the printing works being all in the hands of the state. In the third place, he cannot address any meetings, because the halls all belong to the state. The whole of the press is, of course, official; no independent daily is permitted. In spite of all these obstacles, the Mensheviki have succeeded in winning about 40 seats out of 1,500 in the Moscow Soviet by being known in certain large factories where the electoral campaign could be conducted by word of mouth.

But although the Moscow Soviet is nominally sovereign in Moscow, it is really only a body of electors who choose the executive committee of forty, out of which, in turn, is chosen the Presidium, consisting of nine men who meet daily and have all the power. The Moscow Soviet as a whole is supposed to meet once a week, but did not meet while we were in Moscow. The Presidium, on the contrary, meets daily. Of course, it is easy for the Government to exercise pressure over the election of the executive committee, and again over the election of the Presidium. It must be remembered that effective protest is impossible, owing to the absolutely complete suppression of free speech and free press. The result is that the Presidium of the Moscow Soviet consists only of orthodox Communists.

Kamenev, the President of the Moscow Soviet, informed us that the recall is very frequently employed; he said that in Moscow there are, on an average, thirty recalls a month. I asked him what were the principal reasons for the recall, and he mentioned four: drinking, going to the front (and being, therefore, incapable of performing the duties), change of politics on the part of the electors, and failure to make a report to the electors once a fortnight, which all members of the Soviet are expected to do. From what I saw of Russians, I should judge that almost all would be guilty in this last respect. It is evident that the recall affords opportunities for Government pressure, but I had no chance of finding out whether it is used for this purpose.

In country districts the method employed is somewhat different. It is impossible to insure that the village Soviet shall consist of Communists because, as a rule, at any rate in the villages I saw, there are no Communists. But when I asked in the villages how they were represented on the Volost (the next larger area) or the Gubernia (the area next above the Volost), I was met always with the reply that they were not represented at all. I could not verify this, and it is probably an over-statement, but all concurred in the assertion that if they elected a non-Communist representative he could not obtain a pass on the railway and, therefore, could not attend the Volost or Gubernia Soviet. I saw a meeting of the Gubernia Soviet of Saratov. The representation is so arranged that the town workers have an enormous preponderance over the surrounding peasants; but even allowing for this, the proportion of peasants seemed astonishingly small for the center of a very important agricultural area.

The All-Russian Soviet, which is constitutionally the supreme body, to which the People's Commissars are responsible, meets seldom and has become increasingly formal. Its sole function at present, so far as I could discover, is to

ratify, without discussion, previous decisions of the Communist Party on matters (especially concerning foreign policy) upon which the Constitution requires its decision.

All real power is in the hands of the Communist Party, who number about 600,000 in a population of about 120,000,000. I never came across a Communist by chance: the people whom I met in the streets or in the villages, when I could get into conversation with them, almost invariably said they were of no party. The only other answer I ever had was from some of the peasants, who openly stated that they were Czarists. It must be said that the peasants' reasons for disliking the Bolsheviki are very inadequate. It is said—and all I saw confirmed the assertion—that the peasants are better off than they ever were before. I saw no one—man, woman, or child—who looked underfed in the villages. The big landowners are dispossessed, and the peasants have profited. But the towns and the army still need nourishing, and the Government has nothing to give the peasants in return for food except paper, which the peasants resent having to take. It is a singular fact that Czarist rubles are worth ten times as much as Soviet rubles, and are much commoner in the country. Although they are illegal, pocket-books full of them are openly displayed in the market places. I do not think it should be inferred that the peasants expect a Czarist restoration; they are merely actuated by custom and dislike of novelty. They have never heard of the blockade; many hardly know that there is a war with Poland: consequently they cannot understand why the Government is unable to give them the clothes and agricultural implements that they need. Having got their land, and being ignorant of affairs outside their own neighborhood, they wish their own village to be independent, and would resent the demands of any government whatever.

Within the Communist Party there are, of course, as always in a bureaucracy, different factions, though hitherto the external pressure has prevented disunion. It seemed to me that the personnel of the bureaucracy could be divided into three classes. There are first the old revolutionists, tested by years of persecution. These men have most of the highest posts. Prison and exile have made them tough and fanatical and rather out of touch with their own country. They are honest men, with a profound belief that communism will regenerate the world. They think themselves utterly free from sentiment, but in fact they are sentimental about communism and about the regime that they are creating; they cannot face the fact that what they are creating is not communism, and that communism is anathema to the peasant, who wants his own land and nothing else. They are pitiless in punishing corruption or drunkenness when they find either among officials; but they have built up a system in which the temptations to petty corruption are tremendous, and their own materialistic theory should persuade them that under such a system corruption must be rampant.

The second class in the bureaucracy, among whom are to be found most of the men occupying political posts just below the top, consists of young *arrivistes* who are enthusiastic Bolsheviki because of the material success of bolshevism. It is these men who make the regime so odious in many ways. With them must be reckoned the army of policemen, spies, and secret agents, largely inherited from the Czarist times, who make their profit out of the fact that no one can live except by breaking the law. This aspect of bolshevism is exemplified by the Extraordinary Commission,

a body practically independent of the Government, possessing its own regiments, which are better fed than the Red Army. This body has the power of imprisoning any man or woman without trial on such charges as speculation or counter-revolutionary activity. It has shot thousands without trial, and though now it has nominally lost the power of inflicting the death penalty, it is by no means certain that it has altogether lost it, in fact. It has spies everywhere, and ordinary mortals live in terror of it.

The third class in the bureaucracy consists of men who are not ardent communists, who have rallied to the Government since it has proved itself stable, and who work for it either out of patriotism or because they enjoy the opportunity of developing their ideas freely without the obstacle of traditional institutions. Among this class are to be found men of the type of the successful business man, men with the same sort of ability as is found in the American self-made trust magnate, but working for success and power, not for money. There is no doubt that the Bolsheviki are successfully solving the problem of enlisting this kind of ability in the public service without permitting it to amass wealth as it does in capitalist communities. This is perhaps their greatest success so far outside the domain of war. It makes it possible to suppose that, if Russia is allowed to have peace, an amazing industrial development may take place, making Russia a rival of the United States. The Bolsheviki are industrialists in all their aims; they love everything in modern industry except the excessive rewards of the capitalists. And the harsh discipline to which they are subjecting the workers is calculated, if anything can, to give them the habits of industry and honesty which have hitherto been lacking, and which alone prevent Russia from being one of the foremost industrial countries.

IV. LENIN AND TROTZKY AND GORKY

Soon after my arrival in Moscow I had an hour's conversation with Lenin in English, which he speaks fairly well. An interpreter was present, but his services were scarcely required. Lenin's room is very bare: it contains a big desk, some maps on the walls, two book-cases, and one comfortable chair for visitors in addition to two or three hard chairs. It is obvious that he has no love of luxury or even comfort. He is very friendly and apparently simple, entirely without a trace of *hauteur*. If one met him without knowing who he was, one would not guess that he is possessed of great power or even that he is in any way eminent. I have never met a personage so destitute of self-importance. He looks at his visitors very closely, and screws up one eye, which seems to increase alarmingly the penetrating power of the other. He laughs a great deal; at first his laugh seems merely friendly and jolly, but gradually I came to feel it rather grim. He is dictatorial, calm, incapable of fear, extraordinarily devoid of self-seeking, an embodied theory. The materialistic conception of history, one feels, is his life-blood. He resembles a professor in his desire to have the theory understood and in his fury with those who misunderstand or disagree, as also in his love of expounding. I got the impression that he despises a great many people and is an intellectual aristocrat.

The first question I asked him was as to how far he recognized the peculiarity of English economic and political conditions. I was anxious to know whether advocacy of violent revolution is an indispensable condition of joining the Third Internationale, although I did not put this question directly

because others were asking it officially. His answer was unsatisfactory to me. He admitted that there is little chance of revolution in England now, and that the working man is not yet disgusted with parliamentary government. But he hopes that this result may be brought about by a labor ministry. He thinks that if Mr. Henderson, for instance, were to become Prime Minister, nothing of importance would be done; organized labor would then, so he hopes and believes, turn to revolution. On this ground he wishes his supporters in this country to do everything in their power to secure a labor majority in Parliament; he does not advocate abstention from parliamentary contests, but participation with a view to making Parliament obviously contemptible. The reasons which make attempts at violent revolution seem to most of us both improbable and undesirable in this country carry no weight with him, and seem to him mere bourgeois prejudices. When I suggested that whatever is possible in England can be achieved without bloodshed, he waved aside the suggestion as fantastic. I got little impression of knowledge or psychological imagination as regards Great Britain. Indeed, the whole tendency of Marxism is against psychological imagination, since it attributes everything in politics to purely material causes.

I asked him next whether he thought it possible to establish communism firmly and fully in a country containing such a large majority of peasants. He admitted that it was difficult, and laughed over the exchange the peasant is compelled to make of food for paper; the worthlessness of Russian paper struck him as comic. But he said—what is no doubt true—that things will right themselves when there are goods to offer to the peasant. For this he looks partly to electrification in industry, which, he says, is a technical necessity in Russia but will take ten years to complete. He spoke with enthusiasm, as they all do, of the great scheme for generating electrical power by means of peat. Of course he looks to the raising of the blockade as the only radical cure; but he was not very hopeful of this being achieved thoroughly or permanently except through revolutions in other countries. Peace between bolshevist Russia and capitalist countries, he said, must always be insecure; the Entente might be led by weariness and mutual dissensions to conclude peace, but he felt convinced that the peace would be of brief duration. I found in him, as in almost all leading Communists, much less eagerness than existed on our side for peace and the raising of the blockade. He believes that nothing of real value can be achieved except through world revolution and the abolition of capitalism; I felt that he regarded the resumption of trade with capitalist countries as a mere palliative of doubtful value.

He described the division between rich and poor peasants, and the government propaganda among the latter against the former, leading to acts of violence which he seemed to find amusing. He spoke as though the dictatorship over the peasant would have to continue a long time, because of the peasant's desire for free trade. He said he knew from statistics (what I can well believe) that the peasants have had more to eat these last two years than they ever had before, "and yet they are against us," he added a little wistfully. I asked him what to reply to critics who say that in the country he has merely created peasant proprietorship, not communism; he replied that that is not quite the truth, but he did not say what the truth is.

The last question I asked him was whether resumption of trade with capitalist countries, if it took place, would not

create centers of capitalist influence and make the preservation of communism more difficult. It had seemed to me that the more ardent Communists might well dread commercial intercourse with the outer world, as leading to an infiltration of heresy and making the rigidity of the present system almost impossible. I wished to know whether he had such a feeling. He admitted that trade would create difficulties, but said they would be less than those of the war. He said that two years ago neither he nor his colleagues thought they could survive against the hostility of the world. He attributes their survival to the jealousies and divergent interests of the different capitalist nations, also to the power of bolshevist propaganda. He said the Germans had laughed when the Bolsheviki proposed to combat guns with leaflets, but that the event had proved the leaflets quite as powerful. I do not think he recognizes that the Labor and Socialist Parties have had any part in the matter. He does not seem to know that the attitude of British labor has done a great deal to make a first-class war against Russia impossible, since it has confined the Government to what could be done in a hole-and-corner way, and denied without a too blatant mendacity.

He thoroughly enjoys the attacks of Lord Northcliffe, to whom he wishes to send a medal for bolshevist propaganda. Accusations of spoliation, he remarked, may shock the bourgeois, but have an opposite effect upon the proletarian.

I think if I had met him without knowing who he was, I should not have guessed that he was a great man; he struck me as too opinionated and narrowly orthodox. His strength comes, I imagine, from his honesty, courage, and unwavering faith—religious faith in the Marxian gospel, which takes the place of the Christian martyr's hopes of Paradise, except that it is less egotistical. He has as little love of liberty as the Christians who suffered under Diocletian and retaliated when they acquired power. Perhaps love of liberty is incompatible with whole-hearted belief in a panacea for all human ills. If so, I cannot but rejoice in the skeptical temper of the Western world. I went to Russia believing myself a communist; but contact with those who have no doubts has intensified a thousandfold my own doubts, not only of communism, but of every creed so firmly held that for its sake men are willing to inflict widespread misery.

Trotsky, whom the Communists do not by any means regard as Lenin's equal, made more impression upon me from the point of view of intelligence and personality, though not of character. I saw too little of him, however, to have more than a very superficial impression. He has bright eyes, military bearing, lightning intelligence, and magnetic personality. He is very good-looking, with admirable wavy hair; one feels he would be irresistible to women. I felt in him a vein of gay good humor so long as he was not crossed in any way. I thought, perhaps wrongly, that his vanity was even greater than his love of power—the sort of vanity that one associates with an artist or actor. The comparison with Napoleon was forced upon one. But I had no means of estimating the strength of his communist conviction, which may be very sincere and profound.

An extraordinary contrast to both these men was Gorky, with whom I had a brief interview in Petrograd. He was in bed, apparently dying and obviously heartbroken. He begged me, in anything I might say about Russia, always to emphasize what Russia has suffered. He supports the government—as I should do, if I were a Russian—not because he thinks it faultless but because the possible alterna-

tives are worse. One felt in him a love of the Russian people which makes their present martyrdom almost unbearable, and prevents the fanatical faith by which the pure Marxians are upheld. I felt him the most lovable, and to me the most sympathetic, of all the Russians I saw. I wished for more knowledge of his outlook, but he spoke with difficulty and was constantly interrupted by terrible fits of coughing, so I could not stay. All the intellectuals whom I met—a class who have suffered terribly—expressed their gratitude to him for what he has done on their behalf. The materialistic conception of history is all very well, but some care for the higher things of civilization is a relief. The Bolsheviki are sometimes said to have done great things for art, but I could not discover that they had done more than preserve something of what existed before. When I questioned one of them on the subject, he grew impatient, and said: "We haven't time for a new art any more than for a new religion." Unavoidably, the atmosphere is one in which art cannot flourish, because art is anarchic and resistant to organization. Gorky has done all that one man could to preserve the intellectual and artistic life of Russia. But he is dying, and perhaps it is dying too.

The Forty-Eighters' Position

By ALLEN McCURDY

THE Committee of 48 failed to create a new party at Chicago. This failure was inevitable; but it was a failure which revealed more clearly than ever the necessity for a new party. "One event is more clarifying than volumes of words," says Disraeli in *Tancred*. Such an event was the failure of the Committee of 48 at Chicago. More than a year ago the Committee issued a call to Americans equally opposed to revolution and to reaction, and asked the assistance of all citizens who believed that a party which should appeal to every class of our people who could not express their convictions either through the reactionary Republican and Democratic Parties or through the Socialist Party should be created. An economic platform designed to destroy privilege was created. The responsible leaders of the Committee of 48 believed that the abolition of privilege would benefit the entire American people; that a party aiming at this abolition would create an issue which could not be ignored in the campaign of 1920; and that the vanishing faith of the people in the ballot-box would be restored by the opportunity thus created to destroy economic power by political action. It ought to be remembered that this call was issued at a time when any individual who made known his opposition to both the Republican and the Democratic Parties was immediately classified as a Socialist. There was no other category in which to classify him. Consequently, the press advertised the Committee of 48 as a group of men socialistically inclined. There is no doubt that some Socialists believed the Committee of 48 was some form of socialism under another name. For many Socialists who joined the Committee of 48 expressed their preference for Eugene Debs as the Committee of 48's candidate for President, and some of these Socialists were delegates to our convention in Chicago. For this same reason, many citizens who believed with the responsible leaders of the Committee of 48 in every detail did not join the Committee of 48 because they feared it was socialistic, and it was im-