

to assisting the present régime in developing a stable efficient government. They point to the numerous changes which have already been introduced by the present communist government, to the acknowledgment that mistakes have been made, to the ease of securing introduction of constructive ideas under the present régime. All these facts have persuaded many of the thinking people with whom I have talked to look to the present government in possibly a somewhat modified form as the salvation of Russia.

At present the situation is bad. Russia is straining every nerve to raise an army to oppose the encircling White Guards. That the army is efficient is demonstrated by the present location of Soviet forces who have contended with the Russian White Guard supported by enormous sums of money, munitions, and even soldiers from the Allies. Naturally, transportation is inefficient; it was horrible in the last year of the Czar's régime. Absolute separation from the rest of the world, combined with the chaotic conditions which Russia has passed through since the 1917 revolution, plus the sabotage, which until recently was quite general among the intelligent classes, including engineers, has resulted in a decrease in rolling stock. The transportation of the enormous army which has been raised limits the number of cars which can be used for food. The cutting off of Siberia, Finland, the Baltic Provinces, and until recently the Ukraine, made it necessary to establish new lines of food transportation. Consequently there has been great suffering in Petrograd. Of the population of a million 200,000 are reported by the board of health to be ill, 100,000 seriously ill in hospitals or at home, and another 100,000 with swollen limbs still able to go to the food kitchens. However, the reports of people dying in the streets are not true. Whatever food exists is fairly well distributed, and there are food kitchens where anyone can get a fairly good dinner for 3.50 rubles.

For money one can still obtain many of the luxuries of life. The children, some 50,000 of whom have been provided with homes, are splendidly taken care of, and except for the absence of milk have little to complain of. In the public schools free lunches are given the children, and one sees in the faces of the younger generation little of the suffering which some of the older people have undergone and are undergoing. Food conditions have improved recently, due to the suspension of passenger traffic and the retaking of the Ukraine, where food is plentiful. From 60 to 100 carloads of food have arrived in Petrograd each day since February 18.

Perhaps it is futile to add that my solution of the Russian problem is some sort of recognition of the present government, with the establishment of economic relations and the sending of every possible assistance to the people. I have been treated in a wonderful manner by the communist representatives, though they know that I am no socialist and though I have admitted to the leaders that my civilian clothing is a disguise. They have the warmest affection for America, believe in President Wilson, and are certain that we are coming to their assistance, and, together with our engineers, our food, our school-teachers, and our supplies, they are going to develop in Russia a government which will emphasize the rights of the common people as no other government has. I am so convinced of the necessity for us taking a step immediately to end the suffering of this wonderful people that I should be willing to stake all I have in converting ninety out of every hundred American business men whom I could take to Petrograd for two weeks.

It is needless for me to tell you that most of the stories that have come from Russia regarding atrocities, horrors, immorality, are manufactured in Viborg, Helsingfors, or Stockholm. The horrible massacres planned for last November were first learned of in Petrograd from the Helsingfors papers. That anybody could even for a moment believe in the nationalization of women seems impossible to anyone in Petrograd. Today Petrograd is an orderly city—probably the only city of the world of its size without police. Bill Shatov, chief of police, and I were at the

opera the other night to hear Chaliapine sing in Boris Gudnov. He excused himself early because he said there had been a robbery the previous night, in which a man had lost 5,000 rubles, that this was the first robbery in several weeks, and that he had an idea who had done it, and was going to get the men that night. I feel personally that Petrograd is safer than Paris. At night there are automobiles, sleighs, and people on the streets at 12 o'clock to a much greater extent than was true in Paris when I left five weeks ago.

Most wonderful of all, the great crowd of prostitutes has disappeared. I have seen not a disreputable woman since I went to Petrograd, and foreigners who have been there for the last three months report the same. The policy of the present government has resulted in eliminating throughout Russia, I am told, this horrible outgrowth of modern civilization.

Begging has decreased. I have asked to be taken to the poorest parts of the city to see how the people in the slums live, and both the communists and bourgeoisie have held up their hands and said, "But you fail to understand there are no such places." There is poverty, but it is scattered and exists among those of the former poor or of the former rich who have been unable to adapt themselves to the conditions which require everyone to do something.

Terrorism has ended. For months there have been no executions, I am told, and certainly people go to the theatre and church and out on the streets as much as they would in any city of the world.\*

### 3. Report of Lincoln Steffens

APRIL 2, 1919

Politically, Russia has reached a state of equilibrium; internally; for the present at least.

I think the revolution there is ended; that it has run its course. There will be changes. There may be advances; there will surely be reactions, but these will be regular, I think; politically and economic, but parliamentary. A new centre of gravity seems to have been found.

Certainly, the destructive phase of the revolution in Russia is over. Constructive work has begun.

We saw this everywhere. And we saw order, and though we inquired for them, we heard of no disorders. Prohibition is universal and absolute. Robberies have been reduced in Petrograd below normal of large cities. Warned against danger before we went in, we felt safe. Prostitution has disappeared with its clientele, who have been driven out by the "no-work-no-food law," enforced by the general want and the labor-card system. Loafing on the job by workers and sabotage by upper-class directors, managers, experts and clerks have been overcome. Russia has settled down to work.

The soviet form of government, which sprang up so spontaneously all over Russia, is established.

This is not a paper thing; not an invention. Never planned, it has not yet been written into the forms of law. It is not even uniform. It is full of faults and difficulties; clumsy, and in its final development it is not democratic. The present Russian Government is the most autocratic government I have ever seen. Lenin, head of the soviet government, is farther removed from the people than the Tsar was, or than any actual ruler in Europe is.

The people in a shop or an industry are a soviet. These little informal soviets elect a local soviet; which elects delegates to the city or country (community) soviet; which elects delegates to the government (State) soviet. The government soviets together elect delegates to the All-Russian Soviet, which elects commissioners (who correspond to our Cabinet, or to a European minority). And these commissioners finally elect Lenin. He is thus

\* A memorandum dealing with certain special aspects of the Russian situation is omitted from Captain Pettit's report, for lack of space. Parts of Mr. Steffens' report are omitted for the same reason.

five or six removes from the people. To form an idea of his stability, independence, and power, think of the process that would have to be gone through with by the people to remove him and elect a successor. A majority of all the soviets in all Russia would have to be changed in personnel or opinion, recalled, or brought somehow to recognize and represent the altered will of the people.

No student of government likes the soviet as it has developed. Lenin himself doesn't. He calls it a dictatorship, and he opposed it at first. When I was in Russia in the days of Milyoukov and Kerensky, Lenin and the Bolsheviks were demanding the general election of the constituent assembly. But the soviets existed then; they had the power, and I saw foreign ambassadors blunder, and the world saw Milyoukov and Kerensky fall, partly because they would not, or could not, comprehend the nature of the soviet; as Lenin did finally, when, against his theory, he joined in and expressed the popular repudiation of the constituent assembly and went over to work with the soviet, the actual power in Russia. The constituent assembly, elected by the people, represented the upper class and the old system. The soviet was the lower class.

The soviet, at bottom, is a natural gathering of the working people, or peasants, in their working and accustomed groupings, instead of, as with us, by artificial geographical sections.

Labor unions and soldiers' messes made up the soviets in the cities; poorer peasants and soldiers at the village inn were the first soviets in the country; and in the beginning, two years ago, these lower class delegates used to explain to me that the "rich peasants" and the "rich people" had their own meetings and meeting places. The popular intention then was not to exclude the upper classes from the government, but only from the soviets, which were not yet the same. But the soviets, once in existence, absorbed in their own class tasks and their own problems, which the upper class had either not understood or solved, ignored—no; they simply forgot the council of empire and the Duma. And so they discovered (or, to be more exact, their leaders discovered) that they had actually all the power. All that Lenin and the other Socialist leaders had to do to carry through their class-struggle theory was to recognize this fact of power and teach the soviets to continue to ignore the assemblies and the institutions of the upper classes, which, with their "governments," ministries, and local assemblies, fell, powerless from neglect.

The soviet government sprouted and grew out of the habits, the psychology, and the condition of the Russian people. It fitted them. They understand it. They find they can work it and they like it. Every effort to put something else in its place (including Lenin's) has failed. It will have to be modified, I think, but not in essentials, and it cannot be utterly set aside. The Tsar himself, if he should come back, would have to keep the Russian Soviet, and somehow rule over and through it.

The Communist Party (dubbed "Bolshevik") is in power now in the soviet government.

I think it will stay there a long time. What I have shown of the machinery of change is one guaranty of communist dominance. There are others.

All opposition to the communist government has practically ceased inside of Russia.

All Russia has turned to the labor of reconstruction; sees the idea in the plans proposed for the future; and is interested—imaginatively.

Destruction was fun for a while and a satisfaction to a suppressed, betrayed, to an almost destroyed people. Violence was not in their character, however. The Russian people, sober, are said to be a gentle people. One of their poets speaks of them as "that gentle beast, the Russian people," and I noticed and described in my reports of the first revolution how patient, peaceable, and "safe" the mobs of Petrograd were. The violence came later, with Bolshevism, after the many attempts at counterrevolution, and with vodka. The Bolshevik leaders regret and are

ashamed of their red terror. They do not excuse it. It was others, you remember, who traced the worst of the Russian atrocities and the terror itself to the adoption by the counterrevolutionists of the method of assassination (of Lenin and others), and most of all to the discovery by the mobs of wine cellars and vodka stills. That the Russian drunk and the Russian sober are two utterly different animals, is well known to the Jews, to the Reactionaries, and to the Russians themselves. And that is why this people lately have not only obeyed; they have themselves ruthlessly enforced the revolutionary prohibition decrees in every part of Russia that we would inquire about and hear from.

The destructive spirit, sated, exhausted, or suppressed, has done its work. The leaders say so—the leaders of all parties.

There is a close relationship between the Russian people and the new Russian leaders, in power and out. New men in politics are commonly fresh, progressive, representative; it's the later statesmen that damp the enthusiasm and sober the idealism of legislators. In Russia all legislators, all, are young or new. It is as if we should elect in the United States a brand-new set of men to all offices, from the lowest county to the highest Federal position, and as if the election should occur in a great crisis, when all men are full of hope and faith. The new leaders of the local soviets of Russia were, and they still are, of the people, really. That is one reason why their autocratic dictatorship is acceptable. They have felt, they shared the passion of the mob to destroy, but they had something in mind to destroy.

The soviet leaders used the revolution to destroy the system of organized Russian life.

While the mobs broke windows, smashed wine cellars, and pillaged buildings to express their rage, their leaders directed their efforts to the annihilation of the system itself. They pulled down the Czar and his officers; they abolished the courts, which had been used to oppress them; they closed shops, stopped business generally, and especially all competitive and speculative business; and they took over all the great industries, monopolies, concessions, and natural resources. This was their purpose. This is their religion. This is what the lower-class culture has been slowly teaching the people of the world for fifty years: That it is not some particular evil, but the whole system of running business and railroads, shops, banks, and exchanges, for speculation and profit that must be changed. This is what causes poverty and riches, they teach, misery, corruption, vice, and war. The people, the workers, or their State, must own and run these things "for service."

Not political democracy, as with us; economic democracy is the idea; democracy in the shop, factory, business. Bolshevism is a literal interpretation, the actual application of this theory, policy or program. And so, in the destructive period of the Russian revolution, the Bolshevik leaders led the people to destroy the old system, root and branch, fruit and blossom, too. And apparently this was done. The blocks we saw in Petrograd and Moscow of retail shops nailed up were but one sign of it. When we looked back of these dismal fronts and inquired more deeply into the work of the revolution we were convinced that the Russians have literally and completely done their job. And it was this that shocked us. It is this that has startled the world; not the atrocities of the revolution, but the revolution itself.

The organization of life as we know it in America, in the rest of Europe, in the rest of the world, is wrecked and abolished in Russia.

The revolution didn't do it. The Tsar's Government had rotted it. The war broke down the worn-out machinery of it; the revolution has merely scrapped it finally.

The effect is hunger, cold, misery, anguish, disease—death to millions. But worse than these—I mean this—was the confusion of mind among the well and the strong. We do not realize, any of us—even those of us who have imagination—how fixed our minds and habits are by the ways of living that we know. So with the Russians. They understood how to work



and live under their old system; it was not a pretty one; it was dark, crooked, and dangerous, but they had groped around in it all their lives from childhood up. They could find their way in it. And now they can remember how it was, and they sigh for the old ways. The rich emigrés knew whom to see to bribe for a verdict, a safe-conduct, or a concession; and the poor, in their hunger, think now how it would be to go down to the market and haggle, and bargain, from one booth to another, making their daily purchases, reckoning up their defeats and victories over the traders. And they did get food then. And now—it is all gone. They have destroyed all this, and having destroyed it they were lost, strangers in their own land.

This tragedy of transition was anticipated by the leaders of the revolution, and the present needs were prepared for in the plans laid for reconstruction.

Lenin has imagination. He is an idealist, but he is a scholar, too, and a very grim realist. Lenin was a statistician by profession. He had long been trying to foresee the future of society under socialism, and he had marked down definitely the resources, the machinery, and the institutions existing under the old order, which could be used in the new. There was the old Russian communal land system, passing, but standing in spots with its peasants accustomed to it. That was to be revived; it is his solution of the problem of the great estates. They are not to be broken up, but worked by the peasants in common. Then there was the great Russian Cooperative (trading) Society, with its 11,000,000 families before the war; now with 17,000,000 members. He kept that. There was a conflict; it was in bourgeois hands but it was an essential part of the projected system of distribution, so Lenin compromised and communist Russia has it. He had the railroads, telegraph, telephone already; the workers seized the factories, the local soviets, the mines; the All-Russian Soviet, the banks. The new government set up shops—one in each neighborhood—to dole out for money, but on work tickets, whatever food, fuel, and clothing this complete government monopoly had to distribute. No bargaining, no display, no advertising, and no speculation. Everything one has earned by labor the right to buy at the cooperative and soviet shops is at a fixed, low price, at the established (too small) profit—to the government or to the members of the cooperative.

Money is to be abolished gradually. It does not count much now. Private capital has been confiscated, most of the rich have left Russia, but there are still many people there who have hidden away money or valuables, and live on them without working. They can buy food and even luxuries, but only illegally from peasants and speculators at the risk of punishment and very high prices. They can buy, also, at the government stores, at the low prices, but they can get only their share there, and only on their class or work tickets. The class arrangement, though transitory and temporary—the aim is to have but one class—is the key to the idea of the whole new system.

There are three classes. The first can buy, for example, 1½ pounds of bread a day; the second, three-quarters of a pound; the third, only one-quarter of a pound; no matter how much money they may have. The first class includes soldiers, workers in war, and other essential industries, actors, teachers, writers, experts and Government workers of all sorts. The second class is of all other sorts of workers. The third is of people who do not work—the leisure class. Their allowance is, under present circumstances, not enough to live on, but they are allowed to buy surreptitiously from speculators on the theory that the principal of their capital will soon be exhausted, and, since interest, rent, and profits—all forms of unearned money—are abolished, they will soon be forced to go to work.

The shock of this, and the confusion due to the strange details of it, were, and they still are, painful to many minds, and not only to the rich. For a long time there was widespread discontent with this new system. The peasants rebelled, and the workers were suspicious. They blamed the new system for

the food shortage, the fuel shortage, the lack of raw materials for the factories. But his also was anticipated by that very remarkable mind and will—Lenin. He used the State monopoly and control of the press, and the old army of revolutionary propagandists to shift the blame for the sufferings of Russia from the revolutionary government to the war, the blockade, and the lack of transportation. Also, he and his executive organization were careful to see that, when the government did get hold of a supply of anything, its arrival was heralded, and the next day it appeared at the community shops, where everybody (that worked) got his share at the low government price. The two American prisoners we saw had noticed this, you remember. "We don't get much to eat," they said, "but neither do our guards or the other Russians. We all get the same. And when they get more, we get our share."

The fairness of the new system, as it works so far, has won over to it the working class and the poorer peasants. The well-to-do still complain, and very bitterly sometimes. Their hoardings are broken into by the government and by the poverty committees, and they are severely punished for speculative trading. But even these classes are moved somewhat by the treatment of children. They are in a class by themselves: class A—1. They get all the few delicacies—milk, eggs, fruit, game, that come to the government monopoly—at school, where they all are fed, regardless of class. "Even the rich children," they told us, "they have as much as the poor children." And the children, like the workers, now see the operas, too, the plays, the ballets, the art galleries—all with instructors.

The Bolsheviks—all the Russian parties—regard the communists' attitude toward children as the symbol of their new civilization.

"It is to be for the good of humanity, not business," one of them, an American, said, "and the kids represent the future. Our generation is to have only the labor, the joy, and the misery of the struggle. We will get none of the material benefits of the new system, and we will probably never all understand and like it. But the children—it is for them and their children that we are fighting, so we are giving them the best of it from the start, and teaching them to take it all naturally. They are getting the idea. They are to be our new propagandists." . . .

And this is what is making Lenin and his sobered communist government ask for peace. They think they have carried a revolution through for once to the logical conclusion. All other revolutions have stopped when they had revolved through the political phase to political democracy. This one has turned once more clear through the economic phase to economic democracy; to self-government in the factory, shop, and on the land, and has laid a foundation for universal profit sharing, for the universal division of food, clothes, and all goods, equally among all. And they think their civilization is working on this foundation. They want time to go on and build it higher and better. They want to spread it all over the world, but only as it works. As they told us when we reminded them that the world dreaded their propaganda:

"We are through with the old propaganda of argument. All we ask now is to be allowed to prove by the examples of things well done here in Russia, that the new system is good. We are so sure we shall make good, that we are willing to stop saying so, to stop reasoning, stop the haranguing, and all that old stuff. And especially are we sick of the propaganda by the sword. We want to stop fighting. We know that each country must evolve its own revolution out of its own conditions and in its own imagination. To force it by war is not scientific, not democratic, not socialistic. And we are fighting now only in self-defence. We will stop fighting, if you will let us stop. We will call back our troops, if you will withdraw yours. We will demobilize. We need the picked organizers and the skilled workers now in the army for our shops, factories, and farms. We would love to recall them to all this needed work, and use their troop trains to distribute our goods and our harvests, if only you will call

off your soldiers and your moral, financial, and material support from our enemies, and the enemies of our ideals. Let every country in dispute on our borders self-determine its own form of government and its own allegiance.

"But you must not treat us a conquered nation. We are not conquered. We are prepared to join in a revolutionary civil war all over all of Europe and the world, if this good thing has to be done in this bad way of force. But we would prefer to have our time and our energy to work to make sure that our young, good thing is good. We have proved that we can share

misery, and sickness, and poverty; it has helped us to have these things to share, and we think we shall be able to share the wealth of Russia as we gradually develop it. But we are not sure of that; the world is not sure. Let us Russians pay the price of the experiment; do the hard, hard work of it; make the sacrifice—then your people can follow us, slowly, as they decide for themselves that what we have is worth having."

That is the message you bring back, Mr. Bullitt. It is your duty to deliver it. It is mine to enforce it by my conception of the situation as it stands in Russia and Europe today. . . .

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