

CHARACTERISTICS OF BOLSHEVIK DIPLOMACY

BY ALFRED L. P. DENNIS

THE six articles, dealing with revolutionary plots in America which were issued by the United Mine Workers of America in mid-September, deserve the most careful study. They are the reply by direct publicity to the secret propaganda of the revolutionary forces which are under the supervision of the Soviet Government at Moscow. These forces, directed by Zinoviev, the head of the Third Internationale, have been working for some time to provoke a revolution in the United States.

So serious did the Labour leaders consider the menace of these foreign elements that they have chosen the American method of publicity to combat the Third Internationale and the Communists in America. Such a Labour challenge to the policies of Moscow suggests other questions. What are the real characteristics of Soviet foreign policy, and what can we expect in Bolshevik diplomacy? Has the time come for American recognition of Soviet Russia? Can we find in the present Russian Government those factors which we can trust and accept?

We can depend exclusively on Bolshevik documents for answers to these questions. Of these there is a multiplicity, for the Soviet authorities have from the outset been almost prodigal in the materials that they have furnished to any serious student of their policies. Furthermore the Soviet press is, to a great extent, an official press; its reports of meetings and of speeches are generally authentic. The Soviet Government has, besides, made use of wireless telegraphy for many of its notes and communications. These wireless dispatches are, therefore, sent broadcast to the world to be picked up even by those for whom they were not intended. If we add to these sources the mass of pamphlets which has accumulated in connection with a Government that has from the first existed largely as a propaganda machine, the apparatus for the study of Bolshevik activi-

ties has become enormous. Indeed, it is possible at present only to skim and to pick and choose almost at random from the public materials.

In the first place is the fact that the Soviet Government is a government founded on revolution. In this respect it is similar to the Government of the United States. American sympathies have always gone out to peoples who were struggling for their liberties; but the United States has carefully avoided in time of peace any official assistance to revolutionary forces in foreign countries. The Soviet authorities have, on the contrary, a revolutionary point of view. The Third Internationale is the crusading army of the Communist party throughout the world. It is the militant missionary force that preaches the gospel of revolt both in season and out of season. As Trotsky said last April: "We are revolutionists from head to foot; we always were revolutionists; we are that now; and we shall always remain that to the end!"

It is from such a position, such an exposition of first principles, that we can judge of the second characteristic of Soviet foreign policy. This is its opportunism. In part as a connecting link between the revolutionary and the opportunist elements in Bolshevik diplomacy the reader may recall my article in the October issue of *THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW* on *Germany and the Third Internationale*. This opportunist characteristic is well defined by Trotsky in a recent pamphlet. He writes of "the policy of abrupt turns", which may be translated as the policy of opportunism, and says:

Of the many strategical lessons given us by Lenin we must remember especially well that which he calls the "policy of abrupt turns". That meant—today, on the barricade, and tomorrow, in the filthy stable of the Third Duma; today, a call for world revolution, and tomorrow, a conference with Kuehlman and Czernin, to sign the disgraceful peace of Brest-Litovsk. If the situation has changed, or if we have put a new interpretation upon it, we start a campaign in the West, and we shout "Give us Warsaw!" And if we overestimated the situation, well, then we have the Riga peace, also quite a disgraceful peace as you know. . . .

After that comes the petty, every-day business, and then, lo and behold, from the Ruhr bursts the flame of revolution! Well, is it going to find us different, transformed? Oh, no, my comrades, never! We are not trans-

CHARACTERISTICS OF BOLSHEVIK DIPLOMACY 601

formed; we may change methods and means, but the revolutionary preservation of the Communist party remains our highest aim. We are learning to draw balances, but at the same time we keep a sharp eye East as well as West; and we shall not be taken by surprise. . . . And if the alarm should sound in the West,—something is bound to happen—then in spite of the fact that we may be up to our necks in business problems, calculations, balances and “N. E. P.” [the new economic policy], in spite of all this we respond without hesitation and without procrastination.

Furthermore, secrecy and speed are essential in any such policy. Thus Stalin has just given an eloquent defence of “secret diplomacy” as the handmaid of opportunism. He is attacking those who would favor “free speech”, “legal guarantees”, and “democracy”. Naturally Stalin is opposed to these three and says: “But, comrades, now when we are in power . . . I cannot conceive what such a system would bring us to!” And he continues:

We have to bear in mind that in this situation, when we are besieged by enemies on all sides, it is the sudden blow, the unexpected manœuvre, speed, that decides the issue in our favor. . . . What would become of us if we were first to take out into the street such questions as those of war and peace, the most important of all important questions? . . . We would be done for before one could count two.

This powerful statement is in its essence a demonstration of the grip that the “old diplomacy” still has among the leaders of revolutionary, opportunist, Soviet Russia.

In the third place, is the policy of economic retreat, of a partial accommodation with capitalism to accomplish, if possible, the necessary economic restoration of Russia? This “new economic policy” has been in effect, more or less, for rather over two years. Of the details of its working and of its methods the economists can speak better than I. The beginnings have certainly been made toward the restoration of more normal business conditions. As a practical, everyday question in Moscow the effects of Communism seem to be wearing off. In particular the agricultural efficiency of Russia seems to be on the horizon. The chief difficulty has been the lack of capital to secure necessary agricultural machinery. So far, no country and no group of capitalists have been willing to loan money to the Soviet authorities. They have had to pay as they bought. When, at the Hague

Conference, this became evident, it was Boris Stein, the acute, Russian Soviet, economic observer, who wrote:

Without foreign credits we shall cover the distance to economic prosperity on a passenger train (probably even on a freight train). With foreign credit—on an express train. We are willing to pay for the speed. But if for an express train we have to wait too long, or have to pay an unheard of fare—then Russia will prefer to take a freight truck. The more so since it is used to it.

At present Russia continues to ride on the “freight truck”. Aside from the wretched condition of Russian industry the agricultural situation is important. Lenin appealed to the workers to labour with all their might, for famine is still lurking for many hundreds of thousands. Preparation is now made to export a certain amount of grain, and there is much talk of the harvests of 1923 and 1924 as supplying Russia once more with material with which to purchase needed equipment. Russia must above all learn to organize. Lenin said in November, 1922: “We went too fast at first. . . . We were like an army that got too far in advance of its base. To maintain our power and to uphold the success of the revolution we had to remain in touch with capitalism. But,” he continued:

Where we have admitted capitalism we remain its master. There are mixed companies, half state and half foreign or native capitalists, but the State retains control of them and after using them to acquire commercial knowledge can dissolve them when it will. Thus there is no danger in this close association with the capitalist enemy.

It is, of course, this very uncertainty, of which Lenin boasted, that is perhaps the strongest deterrent to the investment of foreign capital in Soviet Russia. There are undoubtedly individual firms that have made profitable deals in the Russian market. There is a great revival of speculation and of local prosperity, especially in Moscow. Slowly the actual practice of Russian business is altering for the better. Above all, the decrease in the misery of the peasant makes possible the improvement of the entire system of Russian life. It is here that there is a chance for the future, for if the export of Russian grain can finance the state, there may be a relative stabilization of money. At the Communist Party Congress in April, 1923, it was apparent that rather than abandon the principle of the revolution and

rather than give way to the programme of selling out Russia either wholesale or retail, the leaders would favor a policy of slow self-sufficiency. In such a programme the farmer is king; but the financing, export, and marketing of the harvests are also essential.

In all of this economic policy the crucial fact is the establishment of the necessary economic facilities. For that, however, what are especially needed are better men in Soviet service, better methods, and better faith. The morality of Soviet Russia is its greatest danger. As more practical men come into control, and the inefficiency of Russia becomes less, there is a chance of real improvement. The recognition of the principle of fulfilment of international obligations is, of course, part of this improvement. Certainly the progress of Russia is not dependent on recognition, either *de facto* or *de jure*; it is dependent on the safety of the courts, on security both for lives and property, on honesty, and on trade. None of these can be provided by treaty nor guaranteed by diplomacy. They depend on Russia herself.

When, therefore, Col. Haskell, of the American Relief Administration, states that "Communism is dead and abandoned and Russia is on the road to recovery," he apparently confuses two points. That Russia is slowly on the way toward an economic recovery is undoubtedly true. This recovery, however, is still hampered by the uncertainties of Communism and by its continued existence as formulated in the new civil code that has recently been put forth in Russia. The keystone of the new civil code is stated by Brandenburgsky, a Soviet legal expert, to be the declaration regarding private property. The language of the decree reads:

The present decree has no retroactive force and grants no right to the former owners whose property has been expropriated on the ground of the revolutionary law before the promulgation of the present decree, to demand the return of their former property.

This means that the civil code itself is dependent on a decree that legalized every step which the Communist leaders in the Soviet Government had taken with regard to property since November, 1917. At another time it may be possible to review the legal aspects of these codes; but at present, by the text of

the decree and by the frequent speeches of the leaders of Communism, it is impossible to believe that "Communism is dead and abandoned". On the other hand, of the immense services of the American Relief Administration every American has a right to be proud. As Col. Haskell finely says:

Through this service America has not only saved millions of lives, but has given impulse to the spiritual and economic recovery of a great nation, and on our behalf we have created in the assurance of good-will from the Slav races a great inheritance for our children.

The net result of the new economic policy is, therefore, that the progress away from the economics of Communism has not as yet been sufficient to warrant a reversal of policy toward Russia. The uncertainty of her pledges regarding investment is too plainly stated by the leaders of Soviet Russia to give the necessary assurance for the average business man.

There is, in the fourth place, the characteristic of repudiation. The Soviet Government has refused not only all obligations to pay pre-war Czarist debts and war loans, but also advances made to the Provisional Revolutionary Government of March, 1917. The decision to repudiate national debts has gone hand in hand with the appropriation of private property of whatever kind, which was owned both by natives and by foreigners. With this policy as regards natives of Russia the United States naturally has nothing to do. But when the obligations so repudiated are international, the entire basis of international morality and international policy is involved. We can agree with Burke that private property is that "which tends most to the perpetuation of society itself", or with Brissot that "*la propriété exclusive est un vol dans la nature*"; but it is after all in respect to property that the real test comes as to our point of view regarding the Russian revolution.

That revolution resulted, so far as the United States was concerned, in comparatively small loss. It is probable that Russia does not owe the United States more than \$233,000,000. In addition are damages due for losses of government property in Russia and a bill for private property seized or destroyed that would bring the grand total up to about \$900,000,000. On the repudiation of Russian debts the attitude of the average Ameri-

can is much the same as regards all international obligations. He thinks he ought to be paid, but he is willing to wait and, if need be, to scale down. As regards private property he is more particular, in that private property is to him a sacred institution. He agrees with the late President Harding that—

International good faith forbids any sort of sanction of the Bolshevik policy. The property of American citizens in Russia, honestly acquired under the laws then existing, has been taken without the color of compensation, without process of law, by the mere emission of countless decrees. Such a policy challenges the very groundwork of righteous intercourse among peoples and renders useless the basis of good faith everywhere in the world.

So far the Soviet Government has not shown any intention of settling for these debts. The various statements made at the Genoa and Hague Conferences were entirely conditional. There is in short not a scrap of evidence that the principles of Communism have changed in respect to debts. Chicherin may say that he would like to discuss the matter; but proof of intention is lacking. The fundamental consideration of good faith does not lie necessarily in the complete restoration of property nor in the full payment of debts, but in that restoration of efficiency and morals in Russia which will express the sincere intention of meeting international obligations.

Recently Krassin seems to have discussed the question at a meeting in Moscow. A denial that he advocated the principle of payment of debts has been issued. But something of the sort may have occurred, for in the press reports Krassin's speech is subject to evident censorship. On the contrary, speeches in rebuttal were given with a fair degree of fullness. The result is that the impression exists that the subject was debated and that Krassin was in the minority. Thus the problem of the debts remains as before. One can well doubt, however, whether the Czarist government could ever have eventually paid in full its own obligations. In view of the enormous costs of the war, the destruction of property during the civil wars, and the results of the paralysis of Russian industry and agriculture in recent years, it seems almost impossible that repayment can ever take place except on the basis of a scaling down of the amounts involved.

Thus, even if we confine ourselves to these four main characteristics of Bolshevik diplomacy, its continued support of revolution, its opportunism, its economic uncertainties, and its policy of repudiation, the fact remains that there is little to induce the United States to reverse its present policy. The entire problem of internal Russian policy does not directly concern us. The government of Russia is not our affair, though we may have a lively interest as to whether the censorship of the press continues and as to the character of the new codes. The views of Secretary Hughes as to American requirements for the recognition of Russia are well known. It is, however, worth noting that *The New Republic* has recently commented on them editorially, saying: "These are reasonable requirements. They are requirements that the Soviet republic should have met on their own initiative". With that view I am in general agreement.

ALFRED L. P. DENNIS.

Who is going to pay for the destruction by the
allies in Russia? If the allies pay for the
destruction they are going to pay for the war.

INCREASE OF CONTEMPORARY PEOPLES

BY W. RUSSELL TYLOR

MALTHUS, who today is much discussed but little read or understood, startled the world over a century ago by focusing attention upon the problem of population increase, which, as he indicated, surpassed, in its direct relationship to the welfare of human beings and to all forms of social organization, all other problems. Although Malthus was preceded by both Plato and Aristotle in an appreciation of the importance of the population problem, and contemporaneously by Benjamin Franklin and Adam Smith, nevertheless, with the exception of the past decade or so, the century and a quarter that has elapsed since the first publication of the famous *Essay on Population* has added comparatively little of fresh significance to the issues as there presented. It is true that Darwin was partly inspired by the Malthusian theory of surplus population and the ensuing struggle for existence in the formulation of his doctrine of organic evolution. It is also noteworthy that Doubleday and Spencer attempted inadequate theories regarding population and human fecundity. But on the whole the population problem, until quite lately, has either been lost sight of or eclipsed by developments of greater immediate import. So true is this that relatively few today are in a position to appreciate the full significance of a recent statement by Professor Fetter of Princeton, when he characterized the subject of population increase as a problem to which there was none second in importance.¹

Mankind in the twentieth century finds itself on the threshold of an entirely new horizon. For the first time in the history of the human race have human interests really become world problems. From the standpoint of production and consumption of the basic foods and natural resources the world is already a unit. Politically, the struggle is now on between a unifying

¹ Statement before the American Statistical Association at its Chicago meeting in December, 1922.