

A FIVE-YEARS' LESSON

[The fifth anniversary of the November, or Bolshevist, Revolution in Russia was observed by the assembling of the Fourth World Congress of the Third International for its inaugural session at Petrograd, whence it later adjourned to Moscow. Representatives from the United States, Great Britain, France, Germany and other foreign countries were present. The Red Cavalry general, Budennyi, welcomed the delegates in the name of the Red Army. If we are to believe the Bolshevist radio reports, eighty mass meetings were simultaneously held in Petrograd and in the neighboring towns of Kronstadt and Gatchina in honor of the day.

We print below two articles, both from Socialist sources, apropos of this occasion. The first by Zinov'ev, President of the Third International, gives a Bolshevist interpretation of the Revolution, and appears in the Berlin Communist organ *Die Rote Fahne* of November 7; the second, from the Vienna Conservative-Socialist daily *Arbeiter Zeitung* of the same date, represents a diametrically opposite — though Socialist — version of the forces that found expression in the Revolution and the lessons it teaches.]

I

La Commune, one of the most important papers at the time of the Paris Commune, said, in anticipation of that proletarian uprising: 'The Commune was not fighting for the Republic, but for the Revolution.' That was an unusually pertinent remark. It is the more notable because it was published on March 31, 1871, two weeks before the actual outbreak of the revolt. Yes, it was not the Republic but the Revolution that was the issue. The object was no bourgeois-republican upsetting of the Government, but the beginning of a true proletarian emancipation. It was a movement that by its profundity and by its historical significance for the first time attained the dignity of a real Revolution.

If that was true of the Paris Commune, it was still more true of our great Russian Revolution. If we summarize the results of the first half-decade of Soviet rule, we can probably claim for our Revolution the definition of that Paris journal. We in Russia did not fight for a Republic, but for a Revolution. 'All traditions were ground under foot. Something unprecedented happened in the world. A Government existed in which there was not a single member of the ruling class.' It was thus that

Arthur Arnault characterized the uprising at Paris; and Lavrov says in his famous book on the Commune: —

The Revolution of 1871 was determined, for the first time in history, to place at its head 'unknown people' from the masses. The Paris Commune of 1871 was the first organization of society in the world that was controlled and managed by manual workers.

And in spite of all the blunders and all the failures that attended their administration of the Commune, they proved that the working classes can furnish men competent to manage the affairs of the community, men who performed their duties as well as the 'intelligentsia' functionaries who hitherto regarded governing as their specialty. . . . When we compare the legislation of the Commune with the decrees of Parliaments and Cabinets that are drafted by practised and trained statesmen, we find it practically free from criticism. Bookbinders, locksmiths, and journeymen-goldsmiths proved to be as competent in such matters as the graduates of our higher educational institutions, who had been trained under statesmen and politicians. During its short existence, the Paris Commune punctured for all time the illusion that bourgeois education is an indispensable qualification for holding public office. . . . The great days of March 1871 were the first occasion when the proletariat not only made a revolution but also led it.

With far better right can our great Russian proletarian Revolution apply these words to itself. The difference between the Paris Commune and the Russian Soviet Government is the difference between the child and the adult. The Paris Commune survived seventy-two days, and was drowned in the blood of its best sons. The victorious Russian Revolution celebrates its fifth birthday under conditions that prove beyond question that its worst trials are over and that the eventual victory of the workers is assured.

The great Russian Revolution has also produced much that is transient and accidental. Such a titanic river, plunging ahead at full flood, inevitably casts mud, and wreckage, and putrid bodies upon its bank. But the Russian proletarian Revolution has also given the world much that is uncontestedly eternal and immortal.

The immortal element in our Revolution is first and foremost the fact that it has changed completely the mentality of the masses. Our Revolution is above all great in having destroyed the fetich authority of the bourgeois State. The revolutionary hurricane swept away the last remnant of that mystical reverence that still enhaled in the eyes of the 'lower' classes the mystery of government. The hard-working proletariat of Russia saw with their own eyes how a State is built, how a Government comes into being. And no matter what struggles and trials our people have been forced to undergo during these five years, they have retained intact their instinctive conviction that they are the real creators of the new Government, that they are the subjects and not merely the objects of social regulation.

For five years 'unknown people' have ruled one sixth of the earth's surface. 'Locksmiths and bookbinders' have held the reins of government. They

have run our factories, and works, our mines, our railroads, our townships and counties, our provinces — many of which are greater than whole states in Western Europe, — and all Russia.

There was much gnashing of teeth when Comrade Lenin declared that the proletarian Revolution would qualify every kitchen-maid to administer a public office. Look around you, doubting Thomases! Has this prophecy not come true? Do not manual laborers now fill our public offices? Of whom do our Soviets consist if not of manual workers?

'But Russia has no Soviets!' shout our opponents at every street corner. 'Your Soviets are mere fiction!'

Have we no Soviets, then? They tell us that merely because our Soviets are not like bourgeois Parliaments. Their ideal is a bourgeois Parliament. Are there no Soviets? They tell us that in the fifth year of Soviet rule, when Soviets have become the very flesh and blood of the nation!

'There are no Soviets!' I would that these gentlemen might have seen the last election of the Petrograd Soviet, when, in this great reviving proletarian metropolis, there was not a single laborer, not a single laborer's wife, not a single wage-earner, not a single kitchen-maid, not a single youthful worker who did not participate in one way or another in the election of the Soviet.

The immortal element in the Russian Revolution consists in the fact that the mass of the people, millions and tens of millions of workers, have been converted from mere objects of Government into makers of Government. This fact alone created a new Russia, tapped inexhaustible fountains of human energy, raised up a new generation of young men and women, and filled our laborers with such eagerness and daring as the world has never before wit-

nessed. Former revolutions shook the throne of Tsars; but we were the first to overthrow for all ages to come the throne of the bourgeoisie. For the first time in the history of mankind there has existed for five years, to the mortal terror of our enemies — aye, there has lived and grown stronger — not a republic in the bourgeois definition of this word but the revolution, the great proletarian Revolution.

In many countries with an advanced labor movement, both in Europe and in America, the working people are better educated, they stand on a higher cultural level, than our Russian workers. But our Russian proletariat possesses, on this fifth birthday of the Soviet Government, a tremendous advantage over all its workingmen comrades in the rest of the world. This advantage is that our laboring people already have the practical experience of the first proletarian Revolution. Not only have they seen how revolutions are made, but they have made one, themselves. In this respect they stand a head higher than any other working people in the world. If you look sharply, you will discover in the eyes of the most backward Russian weaver, illiterate navy, or clumsy apprentice, a spark of enlightenment that does not yet illumine the eyes of proletarians in those countries where a proletarian Revolution has not yet occurred. This spark, this flash of illumination, was born of the victory of the proletarian Revolution. This something expresses the whole reality of these great years of change — the whole heroism of these titanic, hallowed years. They saw all, they lived through all, they conquered the bourgeoisie. They, these suffering Russian workingmen and workingwomen, are in this sense more enlightened than the workers of any bourgeois country.

But this does not mean that in times

to come, when the workers of the more progressive nations have conquered their bourgeoisie, they may not overtake the Russian proletariat also in this respect. Only men who have a machine in their bosoms instead of a heart can fail to see this immortal element in the Russian Revolution. Moreover, this practical experience makes the Russian proletariat the pioneer, the advance guard of the international labor movement. It has given the Russian workers the power to lead, for several years, the whole Communist International.

Which serves the other — Soviet Russia the World Revolution, or World Revolution Soviet Russia? Our enemies never cease asking this question. Some busy themselves with it, seeking maliciously to sow discord in our midst, others merely because they are stupid. You wise owls! Which serves which? The foundation the roof, or the roof the foundation? Study the puzzle a little longer!

A tiny but at heart an immeasurably great practical experience of the Paris Commune made the uprising of the Paris proletariat fifty-one years ago immortal. That was the example it gave to the working people of the whole world of how the bourgeoisie is to be overthrown. The magnificent example given by the Bolshevist Revolution for five years bestows, in an incomparably higher degree, immortality upon the achievement of the Russian working classes. The Russian proletarian Revolution — whatever skeptics and those weak in the faith may say — lives in the heart of the working people of the whole world. It is for them a model which they will try to copy. It is their battle-cry, their hope, their guiding star. In a word, the immortal element of the Russian Revolution lies in the fact that it is the beginning of the World Revolution.

II

Five years have elapsed to-day since Russian soldiers overthrew Kerenskii's Government and proclaimed a dictatorship of the Soviets. For five years a Bolshevik dictatorship has ruled all the Russias. During the bloody history of these five years a tremendous transformation has occurred in Russia and in the Bolshevism that held sway over Russia. Five years ago the Revolution was a soldiers' uprising against war, against the man-crushing Juggernaut of militarism; and the destruction of militarism was its essential aim.

To-day, after five years have elapsed, Bolshevism has ended by restoring the very militarism it destroyed five years ago. Within a few weeks the Soviet Government has issued a decree reorganizing the Red Army. That decree obliterates every trace of what the Revolution and the revolutionary ideals brought to pass in that army. Russia's military forces are now organized precisely like those of any imperialist Power. Universal service is compulsory. The limitation of that service to the proletariat, the prohibition of the bourgeoisie to bear arms, are no longer mentioned. The periods of service are one year and a half in the infantry, three years and a half in the cavalry and four years and a half in the navy. Training and discipline are modeled closely upon the regulations that we had in Austria before the war, and that existed in the Russian armies of the Tsars. Practice-mobilizations have been restored.

It sounds too absurd to be serious to hear the Tsarist General Tukharzhevskii, now in the service of the Soviet Government, extenuate this revival of militarism by asserting that the Second International believed in a militia, and the Third International believes in a standing army. For that

demand of the Third International was long since granted by the Hohenzollerns and the Hapsburgs, and it is fully met by imperialist France and Italy to-day. Czechoslovakia and Poland compete with each other in their eagerness to fulfill it.

The fact that the Soviet Government should have selected this time, at the very moment they are celebrating the fifth birthday of their power, to restore in its full vigor imperialist militarism, is an impressive symbol. What a path to trace! From the great revolution against militarism to the restoration of that institution by the heirs and beneficiaries of that revolution.

The peasant, in whose hands the war had placed weapons, used those weapons to destroy Russia's feudal land-system, to seize the fields of his landlord, to emancipate himself from feudal services and fees. That was the social content of the Revolution five years ago. The Russian Revolution fully attained this, its economic object. The peasant is the real winner by the last five years' experience, the real beneficiary of the Bolshevik Revolution.

But the Communists, who imagined they could use a peasant revolution to put into effect their own ideas, had a very different design five years ago. They believed the great uprising of the peasants was the beginning of a proletarian revolution, that the Russian agrarian revolution was the opening chapter of a world-wide uprising of the masses. And the social history of these five years in Russia is little else than the record of the struggle between the objective realism of the Russian peasant revolution and the subjective illusions of the Communists, who used that peasant revolution to set up an absolute Government of their own. Yes, the history of these five years may

be summarized as a victory of peasant common sense over fanciful Communist theories in the most backward country — industrially — of Europe.

Wherever Bolshevism has made itself the champion of peasant revolution, it has conquered. Wherever it has attempted to apply its wild ideas to the actual problems of economic life in Russia, as a champion of a Socialist transformation of society, it has been defeated. This is illustrated in the foreign history of the Soviet Republic. When fighting the reactionary Tsarist leaders, the Red Army has performed prodigies of valor and won brilliant victories; for then the Russian peasant was defending his land, the land which he had seized, against feudal reactionaries or counter-revolutionaries who would wrest it from him. But when the Soviet Government launched these same peasant soldiers against Poland in order to set up a Soviet Government in that country and to carry the gospel of Communism on the points of their bayonets to Germany, the Red Army was defeated. The peasant soldier refused to fight for Communism as a doctrine, which he did not comprehend and in which he felt no concern.

If we turn to the domestic history of the Soviet Republic during these five years, the lesson is the same. The peasant revolution has been achieved. The peasant is sitting fast upon the land that once belonged to his landlord. No power in the world can ever take it from him. But the illusion that a peasant revolution will end in setting up a Socialist society has vanished.

For four long years the Soviet Government tried to convert that illusion into reality. Rivers of blood have been shed for that cause. The Russian people have suffered nameless misery under the Utopian experiments of their dictators.

But a year ago Bolshevism capitulated to the relentless laws of economic necessity. It was forced to surrender its Communist plans and to restore capitalism. This is the sum and substance of the 'new economic policy.'

Communism and the pseudo-Socialist distributive organization have been dissolved. Free trade has been legitimized. Banks and exchanges have reappeared. Eight thousand factories and mines have been turned over to capitalist managers. A new bourgeoisie bearing, as it does in every country where inflation and depreciation have run riot, the ugly features of a profiteering class, has developed with uncanny rapidity and has seized control of the business of the country.

Simultaneously, the Government itself has taken on capitalistic features. Heavy indirect taxes and customs duties are levied. The overgrown bureaucracy is being reduced, Government industries are being abandoned.

Only one of the Communist illusions still survives. Fondly believing that they would speedily transform society and impose their institutions on the bourgeoisie and the peasants, the Bolsheviks built up a despotic party-tyranny, abolished personal freedom, subjected the whole nation to brutal police control. The expectations that were used to justify such measures have proved fallacious; they have been confessedly abandoned; but a despotic terrorist party-tyranny continues. The dictatorship no longer serves the cause of Revolution. To-day it only supports the rule of a minority.

Thus the Russian Revolution ends in an absolutism stripped of every revolutionary dream, just as the English Revolution of 1649 ended in the absolutism of Cromwell, and the French Revolution of 1789 in the absolutism of Bonaparte.

AN AUTUMN VISIT TO BAVARIA

BY AURIOL BARRAN

From the *Daily Telegraph*, November 15
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I HAVE just returned from Munich. Taking this town as an example of economic conditions as they are to-day throughout the German Reich — here events have come to pass in the space of a few months that ordinarily would have taken years to become complete realities. There is a marked difference between the cost of the smallest commodity in May of this year and that in October. In the spring I paid 800 or 900 marks for a bedroom at a first-class hotel; in October, from 1,500 marks upwards, with an additional tax of 675 marks per day, compared to the previous sum of 405 marks. For a light French breakfast, consisting of tea, rolls, and coffee, I was charged 90 marks recently, ~~instead of 40 marks.~~ These prices are *prix d'étrangers*, but they serve to illustrate the increase in the cost of living; for, although foreigners are made to bear the brunt, and are fleeced more than ever, yet even Germans have to pay according to the new tariff.

An ordinary table d'hôte luncheon cannot be had for less than 800 marks. A portion of spinach alone costs 90 marks, an omelet 80 marks, a portion of salad 50 marks, a fruit compote 100 marks, bread and a portion of butter 40 marks, trout 370 marks, and half of a chicken 820 marks. These quotations can only be rough estimates, for the standard of living changes daily. If you, or a German, go and dance at a night club or cabaret, your bill will come to something like 3,480 marks. In most places you are obliged to order

champagne. A bottle of 'Bubbly' will cost you 1,800 marks at least. A plate of fancy biscuits which is served with the wine is valued at 300 marks, a Prunier is the same price, and a small half-bottle of soda-water is 40 marks.

But, again, these figures are approximate, and can only be indicative of the change that has taken place recently, for these prices form a complete parallel to those existing in Austria last year. Even the ordinary taxi fare starts at 150 marks or more. The porter who carries your luggage at the railway station has a fixed tariff of 16 marks per parcel, and a tramway fare is 15 or 20 marks in Munich, though a little less in Berlin — compared to the nine kronen charged in Vienna in the early autumn of last year!

This sets one thinking. One has literally to train one's brain to get accustomed to reckoning everything in hundreds and thousands! You cannot buy anything — except a pencil — in a shop without starting at a hundred marks, and any article of clothing bears a fancy price of some thousands of paper notes. For any extensive purchasing it would be necessary to carry a suitcase to contain the requisite amount.

As I wrote during my last visit to Munich, the foreigner is fleeced mercilessly. Passports must be produced on arrival, and your expenses are assessed in dollars, pounds sterling, or francs, as the case may be. You pay according to nationality. The porter at your hotel has to vouch for this when ordering tickets at the theatre, where any stran-