

TOWARDS THE NEXT RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

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EVERY revolution ultimately ends in some new bourgeoisie. The French Revolution created the modern Middle Class with its craving for material wealth, security and stability of life. The Russian Revolution, perhaps less corrupt than any other radical movement in modern history, had finally to pay the same price for using up emotions and pushing a great people into frantic social upheaval. Antagonism between Trotzky, with his idea of the Permanent Revolution, and Stalin indicated the longing for "Bourgeoisisation" even to the outside world. Characteristically, the forces making for rest and stability, represented by Stalin, ultimately squashed the eternal revolutionaries. All genuine revolutionaries sided with Trotzky, and reproached Stalin for high treason against the sacred ideal. After some time the revolutionary must become the most reactionary man on earth. The comparison of Stalin with the Tsars contains a very true idea. After the eradication of the old régime, the revolutionaries were next in line for the firing squad and the ugly purges. Old Régime and Old Guard have much in common also in their mentality. If the revolution has sunk into facile opportunism, it is they who are united in the desire for change, they who have become the revolutionaries against the new vested interests of the victorious group.

This process of changing places, as the children play, will not come to an end until the last stratum of the people has satisfied its desire for social and political renovation, illusionary as their desires may prove before the judgment of history. In Russia, this lowest layer of merely instinctive dreams and wishes is the peasantry. Never in history was a peasantry shifted so quickly and ruthlessly through the most diversified positions on the social ladder: serfs only two generations ago, they became nominally free in order to be sacrificed to the Moloch of modern industrialization. Then Stolypin created the basis for a genuinely free peasantry. Ten years after, the Bolshevik Revolution first nourished their illusion that revolution means more land. After ten more years of revolution, the peasants were cast once more into the utter wilderness of organized slavery, more efficient than the patriarchal despotism of

the old serfdom could ever venture to develop. Had the Hitlerian attack (with its violation of what on this earth is most holy to the Russian peasant, Mother Russia) not acted as a fiendish outburst to push the Russian peasant into some kind of compulsory solidarity with his government, the friction between the peasants and the centralism of the Soviets would have come just as automatically as this afterbirth of revolutionism is bound to grow from the soil of every violent social change.

In Russia of to-day the peasants are the only class which owes nothing in the material sense, and very little in the spiritual, to the Revolution. The new bureaucracy is entirely the child of the new system; they are the owners of the freshly created social positions and, to a certain extent, even holders of individual vested interests. The new industrial working class, poorly paid as they may be (measured in western terms), is equally obliged to the new regime which built up the new factories and industrial cities. The peasant's bill remains the only one to be paid. In the French Revolution, the peasant would not join the church again, in spite of much genuine religiousness, because this would have meant the revival of the nobility from which the peasants had "inherited" the land. The Russian peasant to-day has no such windfall to defend; what he had "inherited" during the revolutionary turmoil from church and nobility was again taken from him after bare ten years, more ruthlessly than all forces of the old régime would have ventured to alienate it from his family. So long as he could subconsciously feel the necessity of industrialization at his expense, namely, as inevitable expedient for being armed against the long expected attack from the West, he was prepared to suffer with that equanimity which can be found only in the Asiatic-Russian soul. But as soon as this danger has subsided, he will start doubting the wisdom of the Kremlin, and still more the moral justification for the new bureaucracy to feed themselves, and very well at that, on the fruits of his toil and sweat.

This means that a Third Revolution, the coming of age of the Russian peasant, is largely, if not alone, a question of the international position of Russia. When the present war ends as it is likely to end, namely, with the weakening of the military power of the neighbours of Russia and a general decrease in the spiritual force of the Western World at large, the exterior pressure will have been removed which up till now kept the Russian peasant quiet and reluctant to embark upon new social adventures. While it is true that the *Kolkhoz* is largely the result of the desire to gain grain surpluses for the quickly growing

armament industries, and for the financing of imports necessary for modern weapons which were to match the western equipment, the main reason for this agrarian socialism will have fallen to the ground as soon as the western war against Russia has worn itself out. Ideological reasons of social justice and such like have never played any part in this last stage of socialization, the destruction of the *Kulaki*. What is left of revolutionary impetus will not even suffer from this reversal of agrarian communism, once the nightmare of Russian politics, external aggression, has disappeared.

There is a long tradition on which this Third Revolution will be based. Since the times when Stenka Razin carried the torch of rebellion in 1668, the hopes of the peasants rose high and dropped low with the political tide. For centuries despotism in its different forms of social conquest, vassalage, conscription and taxation has haunted the peasantry. It has been a never ending battle, with changing forms of attack. Now a new form of oppression threatened from the masters of the Russian Revolution, who had promised liberty but soon started to rule from the remote capital and with a centralism more powerful and stricter than the old. The Russian peasant was not blind to the dawn of the Revolution. At first he was bribed by the huge bait; all the land around him was to be his own. In his initial excitement he forgot about the titles of possession and the tax collector. When the officials came with Lenin's decree, that every pod of grain above the barest need of the peasant had to be delivered to the State—and that at lower than market prices—he rebelled in line with all neighbours, the poor with the *Kulak*. He forced a reversion of the levy into a food tax. At the same time, freedom to sell his produce on the open market, or to barter for goods he needed, was restored to him. But the rebellious spirit did not die down. For the peasant in all countries, an essentially conservative element and therefore indomitable by force, taxation means robbing him of the legitimate reward for his work. He cannot be an altruist. He feels the pressure to save for a rainy day in a changing climate, and in his isolation from the outside world on his fenced island.

Fundamentally all Soviet decrees were opposed to the innermost feeling of the peasant. The Kronstadt Rebellion of 1921 reflected the bitterness of his sentiments: "The Communists selected the best pieces of land, and weighed more heavily on the poor peasant than the former land owners. A new Communist serfdom arose. The peasant in the Soviet farm became a slave." The peasant reacted with the old weapon

of passive resistance. It did not pay to raise any surplus which the State ultimately seized.

This was the signal for the great experiment of agrarian Communism undertaken by the Soviets. The Kremlin solved the great dilemma by socializing the land. The cities starved because the large estates of the nobility, which formerly had been the main grain producers, had been destroyed. The peasants grew only their own food, and this at a time when the new industrial programme led to a rapid urbanization of the whole country. In the eyes of Moscow they were also suspected of conservative and religious ideas undesirable to the new rulers.

The poor and middle class peasants were again bribed into acquiescence when the drive against the *Kulaki* took serious forms. The young people were generally won over by the Soviets through mechanization and the grandiose effort of educating the village in the new creed. For the old generation the new bureaucracy remained the same foe as of old, the white collar workers and desk farmers with their floods of regulations.

The frictions proved to be too great. The authorities had again to retreat from the dogma, and legalized the habits of separating homesteads and gardens from the *Kolkhoz*. The statistics show that this leniency bore fruit for cities and villages.

When the "Pravda" announced, in February, 1941, that the test case of paying a bonus for increase in production in the Ukraine would be extended to all *Kolkhozy* in Russia, this meant a further step towards private economy on farms. The present war has for the time being stopped this progress. Can it be expected that after the war the Russian peasants will suddenly submit to a rigorous dictate of farm control by the far away Kremlin? Have the quota ratings been free of the trial and error in centralized planning? Have the party officials in charge been supermen who never succumbed to the pressure from above, by penalty of death, to the temptation of giving the central needs preference over local requirements?

The peasants will not have forgotten that in February, 1941, quotas of delivery were still enforced in meat and poultry based on the acreage of the collective farms. Those who had no cattle or livestock were compelled to buy their deliveries from neighbours in cash. The long promised self-government in the *Kolkhozy* has never matured, and the war will have delayed this process still more. All is still decreed by the Politbureau. But the great landslide in Soviet agriculture will come when the soldiers of this war return. How will they presumably react?

It is very likely that they will still admire the large scale

planning of the Soviets providing irrigation, electricity and motorized transport. But in the desire to break the chains around individualism at home the old dream of "Black Partition" will presumably be reborn. It is likely that the Russian government will try some compromise by transforming the collectives into farms in which all members would have a vote in deciding about farming schedules and planning. But this would be only a transitory stage towards completely private enterprise.

Throughout the world there seems to be a general agreement that only one-man management can run a farm. Furthermore, this transformation to some kind of modern *Mir* would mean the abolition of the grain factories which have saved Russia from starvation in critical times in the past, and would be equivalent to the abandonment of technical progress in grain and hay production. In the production of milk, butter and cheese, of meat and livestock breeding, the collectives in Russia have proved unable to beat the individual farmstead. The stubborn refusal of the theorists and politicians in Moscow to ease the ban on the size of the dwarf farms has been largely responsible for the dire shortage of these types of foods in the whole of Russia. The time when anyone was dubbed a *Kulak* and purged who raised cattle to breeding age are still sticking in the minds of the Russian peasant. The inconsistency of government measures has increased the tendency on the part of the average Russian peasant to bide for time, and to press in recurrent waves for the right of absolute ownership of increasing strips of land. He considers the garden to which he has held so tenaciously as a jumping-off place, and the bonus system as a bribe, not to be refused, but yet a bribe. And there is no doubt that this recalcitrance of the Russian peasant is largely responsible for the many setbacks in the Soviet agrarian policy.

The future evolution will presumably make use of the cooperative nature of the traditional agrarian institutions of Russia. Collectivism will gradually develop into cooperation. This would stem the trend of Russian economy from the soil to industry, and thus reverse one of the most cherished ideas of the Soviets. This rapid shift to the cities will come to a standstill; it was large enough in the past, for, while sixty per cent of the national income of Russia was derived from agriculture in 1913, this figure had decreased to only 29.3 per cent in 1940. With this gradual development to cooperation, the Soviet system need not sacrifice its most sacred principle, that no wealth may be acquired by means of hired help. Under cooperative rule all are equal shareholders. Wealth in the peasant's mind might

be also savings in cash or bonds. But ultimately it is only land, the one unique eternal value with a power of regeneration of its own. What does it mean if a *Kolkhoz* chairman or *Kirghiz* farmer subscribe one million roubles in war bonds, as was recently announced? Peasants cannot put their savings into consumers' goods or livestock, because the former are not available and the latter cannot be increased on the small homesteads. The present experience of cash surpluses will therefore stimulate even more the move to own more land individually.

How will the dictator of Russia react upon this development? In the past, whenever the dogmatic course of the party has threatened their régime, the dictator has chosen to yield. His actions in the army reform show that he does not hesitate to defy and burn old Bolshevik prejudices. When he sees the time has come to choose between the party bureaucracy and dogma, or peasantry, he can invoke again Lenin's authority who urged that "the Soviet State should be based on a combination of the stimulus of individual gain with the general interest of the proletarian dictatorship."

Nietzsche, who sometimes had deep insights into the psychology of peoples and nations, characterized Russian politics as "the slower, the better". This is precisely the attitude of the Russian peasant. Insofar he is the most typical representative of the Russian national character and political practice. What he holds, he will hold to the last. He always will apply the French maxim: "*reculer pour mieux sauter*", step back in order to jump better. Only in the greatest emergency will he recede, as during the scorched earth policy in the Napoleonic Age and the recent Ukrainian campaign. He may have felt instinctively that the *Kolkhoz* was necessary to keep him Russian altogether, for without the industrialization and urbanization of the last twenty years the dreaded flood of western invasion could not have been stopped. But in the long run he will find out that the grain factory is not congenial to him. And for the Russian soul it is indeed a surrogate accepted in emergency to match the West with its powerful industrial and war potential. When this emergency has passed away, the Russian peasant will come to his own again. He will burn what he was compelled to adore, and adore what he burned, and the time will have come for him to raise his voice which is now drowned in the cries of war and revolution. Only then, the last word will be spoken about the land and who should own it.