

"The idea becomes power when it penetrates the masses."  
—Karl Marx.

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# Russia and the World Revolution

By Wm. Z. Foster

THE fact that the Russian revolution started 140,000,000 people on the highroad to emancipation gives it most tremendous importance. For centuries the masses in Russia suffered hopelessly under the iron boot of the czars. Then came the historic upheaval of 1917 and swept this tyranny aside with an irresistible flood. The revolution is the greatest thing in the whole life of the Russia people.

But of far more importance than its effect upon the Russian people is the influence of the revolution upon the proletariat of the world. This is profound, far-reaching, and epoch-making. It is what gives the Russian revolution its real significance and erects it into the supreme event in history.

In many ways the Russian revolution has deeply affected the course of the world labor movement. But in this short article only three of these can be indicated: (1) the establishment of a living symbol of proletarian revolution; (2) the creation of a clearly-defined, well-organized world revolutionary organization; (3) the realization of a tremendous fund of revolutionary experience. These three phases are of the very greatest consequence to the international working class.

## 1. The Symbol of Revolution.

Until 1917 the program of proletarian emancipation rested pretty much in the realms of theory. The workers of the world talked of it, dreamed of it, and speculated about it. But it lacked reality. It was but a scientific calculation and an inspiring hope. It was only by the advent of the Soviet government in Russia that the concept of revolution took on flesh and blood. Then it became a living, vibrant thing and an inspiration to the workers of the world.

The masses learn best from concrete facts; they require definite object lessons. They cannot be satisfied with theory alone. To them incomparably the best argument for the world revolution is to see a workers' revolution take place successfully in some country. The Russian revolution has provided them with that vitally necessary object lesson. It is a tremendous demonstration of the possibility and practicality of the proletarian revolution. It is the world symbol of the working class victorious.

When the Russian workers and peasants gave the death thrust to Russian czarism and capitalism, a thrill went thru the world workers. They were deeply inspired and heartened, not to sit idly by and hope for the Russians to bring about the world revolution, but to wage war similarly against the exploiters in their own countries. And as the Russian revolution has progressed, overcoming the unheard of difficulties confronting it and gradually consolidating its power, it is driving deeper and deeper into the hearts of the workers the conviction that they can and must also overthrow the power of their bourgeoisie in similar fashion. The facts that the Russian workers have broken the united front of capitalism and established one proletarian government, that they have forced the capitalist world to recognize this government, and that they are unquestionably making the new proletarian society a success, constitute a revolutionary factor of high importance thru their stimulation and education of the international working class.

Much of the early stimulative effect of the Russian revolution was lost because the workers' organizations in most countries were dominated by social-democrats and other reformers, who choked back the rising revolutionary spirit of the workers. But Russia is now entering into a new

stimulative period, after the long and depressing era of hunger and economic chaos. Industry is improving and the workers' standards of living are rapidly rising. In all other countries the workers' standards are falling. This contrast, of a growing prosperity in proletarian Russia, and an increasing poverty in capitalist countries, always before the workers' eyes, is bound to exert a powerful effect and to greatly stimulate revolutionary discontent and action. Russia is the living embodiment of the new society. It is the inspiring symbol of the proletarian revolution. As such it is of vast significance to the international working class.

## II. The Communist International.

But the Russian revolution has furnished the workers of the world with not only the greatest example of a successful proletarian society, but also with a powerful revolutionary organization. The Communist International

tries had to rely upon the leadership of yellow social-democrats, who dominated their organizations and who led the masses into the brutal slaughter. And in 1918, when the workers, disillusioned by the war, surged all over Europe in a revolutionary wave, these same social-democrats, still controlling the workers' political and industrial organizations, dissipated the revolutionary movement and saved capitalism.

But since those times something important has happened, the most important thing that has taken place since the end of the war. This was the formation of the Communist parties in the various countries and their unification into the Communist International. The significance of this will be apparent in the next great crisis of international capitalism. If this crisis does not come before, it is bound to come with the beginning of the new world war which is now in

tarian revolutions will have to take and the forces they will have to contend with.

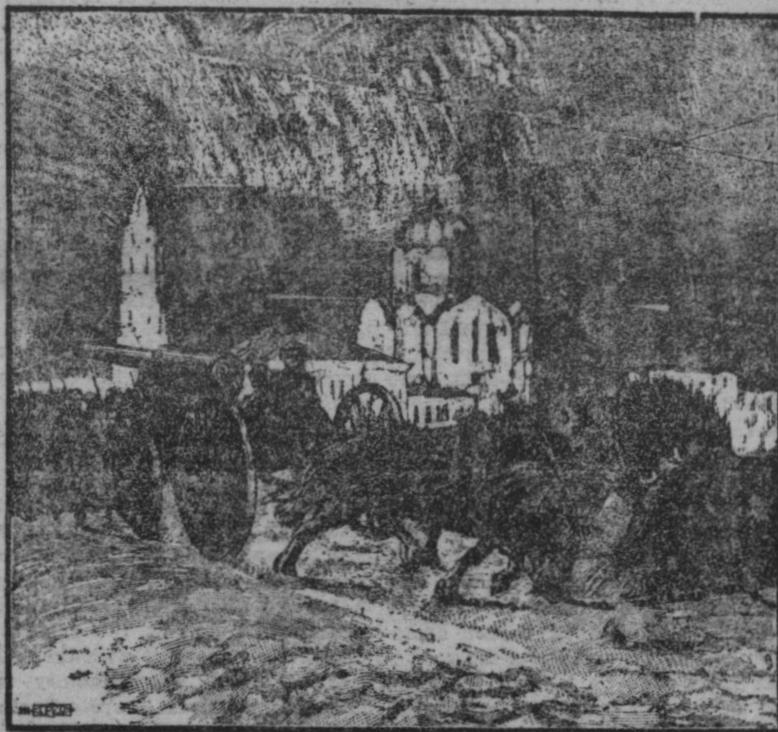
Russian revolutionary experience is so stupendous that hardly the faintest outlines of it can be indicated here. No longer is the working of the dictatorship of the proletariat a matter of speculation. The Russian revolution has made it thoroly understood. Likewise, the part the Communist Party has to perform, with its iron discipline and elaborate nuclei system, in maintaining the dictatorship. The principles underlying the Soviet form of government are now an open book. The true petty-bourgeois character of the social-democratic, anarchist, and syndicalist movements has been demonstrated as clearly as day. The enormous resistance of the capitalists and their intelligentsia hangers-on has been learned. Their instinctive campaigns of sabotage and counter-revolution have been experienced and ways devised to check them. A vast fund of information has been accumulated as to the relations between the workers and farmers and of the need and manner of the workers taking the lead in the revolutionary struggle and in the work of social reconstruction.

In the realms of industry the Russian workers have gained an enormous experience. They have tried out almost every conceivable system of management and tested all of them. They are solving the problems of developing the spontaneous discipline and incentive to work, to take the place of the capitalist slave-driving methods of the past. They have worked out the principle of the new economic policy, and they know its dangers and advantages. Likewise, the Russians have learned the true functions of the trade unions, the co-operatives and other working class organizations, before, during, and after the revolution. They have also mastered the principles of proletarian military organization, after a bitter and sanguinary experience. They have learned the most valuable lessons as to the psychology of the masses during the revolution and its attendant hardships. They have solved the questions of proletarian justice, control of the press, and a thousand others that were not even dreamed of before the revolution.

This tremendous fund of revolutionary experience, gained at such great cost by the Russian workers, is at the disposal of the world proletariat. All of it, of course, cannot be applied in every country, but a vast amount of it can. It shows the right way for the workers to go and the pitfalls they must keep clear of. Profiting by the errors and accomplishments of the Russians, the workers in other countries will save themselves endless hardships and suffering. The Russian revolution marks an epoch in the history of the working class. To Marxism, or socialism in theory, it has added Leninism, or socialism in action. It has blazed the trail for the world revolution.

On this Seventh Anniversary of the Russian revolution the active Communists thruout the world should call to mind the three above-mentioned phases of the world-significance of the great 1917 upheaval. They should be stimulated by the example of the Russian revolution to make redoubled efforts in their own countries, they should diligently strive for the upbuilding of the Communist International, and they should study and absorb the great lessons taught by the vast experience of the heroic Russian working class. Thus they will realize in some degree the world importance of the Russian revolution.

## MOSCOW



In November, 1917

is the most important working class organization in the history of the world. It is a direct outgrowth of the Russian revolution and is intimately bound up with the latter's fate.

The Communist International is a world organization in the most real sense of the word. It is highly centralized and disciplined. Its various sections are animated by the same conceptions of Communism. It is in an altogether different class than the Second International, which has autonomous, undisciplined, and individualistic national sections. It is the militant, fighting vanguard of the international proletariat.

A first condition for the effective functioning of such an organization as the Communist International is that it establish its headquarters within the protection of a great proletarian power. To try to live in a capitalist country would be to condemn the organization to an underground existence and to reduce the international movement to a chaotic and impotent condition. But proletarian Russia furnishes a headquarters and protection to the Communist International, even as it gives it much of its inspiration and leadership. This is of greatest importance to the world's workers.

In 1914, when capitalism came to a crisis at the outbreak of the world war, the workers in the various coun-

tries had to rely upon the leadership of yellow social-democrats, who dominated their organizations and who led the masses into the brutal slaughter. And in 1918, when the workers, disillusioned by the war, surged all over Europe in a revolutionary wave, these same social-democrats, still controlling the workers' political and industrial organizations, dissipated the revolutionary movement and saved capitalism.

## III. Revolutionary Experience.

Far more important, however, than even the establishment of a living example of successful proletarian revolution and providing a world revolutionary center, the Russian revolution has been the means of the workers accumulating a tremendous fund of revolutionary experience. This is enormous in extent and incalculable in value. Before the Russian revolution, proletarian revolutionary experience was meager. It was little beyond that gained in the Paris Commune. Nearly everything was theoretical. But the revolution in Russia has changed this. Its vast experience has shown the workers of the world the broad outlines of the way all prole-