

# Trotsky's Defence of Red Terrorism at First Hand

## Soviet Dictator's Statement Answering Carl Kautsky's Attack Reaches Civilized World and Emphasizes Feroocious Attitude Toward Humanity

**TERRORISM** from its inspirational fountainhead is defended and explained in the remarkable statement by Leo Trotsky which follows. The co-dictator of Russia, who shares with Lenin absolute power over millions of hapless human beings, was stirred to issue this doctrinal defence of the Bolshevik policy because of the widely circulated book "Terrorism and Communism" written by Carl Kautsky, one of the leading Marxian Socialist writers of Germany. The article from the pen of the Bolshevik Minister of War was passed out of Russia presumably with his co-signature through Riga a few weeks ago. It is the first full statement of the Red Government to appear in many months and it throws a lurid light upon the fanatical character of the feroocious extremists who have classed liberals, radicals, Socialists, bourgeois, capitalists and royalty as one.

This statement of Trotsky's proves conclusively there can be no halfway house in Socialism. It shows the Kerenky's government was in an illogical position when it faced the attack of a militant communism. The practical elimination of the intelligentsia in Russia under Bolshevik rule by death, exile or voluntary migration proves that no matter what social reform ideas they may have had they count for nothing since the dictatorship of the proletariat holds sway.

Reasoning of the Bolshevik leader is wholly deadly in his attacks on the elements opposed to his ideas. But his statement contains the fatal defect of failing to realize that it is not human nature to push logic to the extreme conclusion. His assertion that "two parties in a country will never decide the question of who is to rule by referring to paragraph this or that of the constitution, but by the use of every form of violence" is the weakest point in his chain of reasoning. Ordinary life proves that men and women are continually compromising; otherwise all social or married life would be an impossibility.

What might be termed "war neurosis" dominates Trotsky's statement throughout. The extremely violent passages that appear unexpectedly throw a spotlight of red on the processes of thought of the mind that is driving Russia.

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**T**HE first full statement in many months to reach the outer world has just arrived here from Moscow. It is signed by Leo Trotsky, co-dictator with Lenin. It apparently was inspired by the attack on Bolshevism published in Germany recently by Carl Kautsky, for the introductory paragraph says:

"The great charge made against the Bolsheviks in America and by some of the British labor leaders with whom I have recently spoken in Russia is that they practise terrorism. But I shall only consider that charge in so far as it is advanced, not by capitalists or by capitalists, but by Socialists. The most prominent Socialist who has advanced it so far is the well known German Communist writer, Carl Kautsky. In answering Kautsky I shall at the same time answer the objections of some American and British publicists, making use of Russian Bolshevik publications, which are not likely, however, to be found either in England or America."

Trotsky then takes up Kautsky's charges and analyzes terrorism from the time of the Reformation on.

**T**HE initial seizure of power by the Soviets in the beginning of November, 1917, went off, as it were, by itself, with infinitesimal loss of life. The Russian bourgeoisie felt themselves so estranged from the mass of the people, so destitute of internal strength, so compromised by the course and the outcome of the war, so demoralized by the Kerensky regime, that they hardly plucked up the courage for any resistance.

In Petrograd Kerensky's rule was overthrown almost without any fighting at all. In Moscow the resistance was more prolonged, chiefly because of the lack of revolutionary leadership in that city. In most of the provincial towns power was transferred to the Soviets on the mere receipt of a telegram from Petrograd or Moscow.

If the matter had ended there the Red Terror would never have even been mentioned because it would never have come into existence. But November, 1917, was already a witness to the nascent resistance of the propertied classes. It is true, however, that the interference of the imperialist states of the West was required to give the Russian counter-revolution faith in itself and to lend to its resistance ever-growing strength. This can be shown, in both great and little facts, from day to day, throughout the whole period of the Soviet revolution.

Feeling itself without any support among the soldiers, Kerensky's general staff was inclined to recognize without resistance the Soviet Government, which had already begun negotiations with the Germans for an armistice. But then came the protests of the Entente military missions, accompanied by open threats. The staff became frightened. Edged on by allied officers, it started on the path of resistance. This led to armed conflict and to the killing of Gen. Dukhonin, the chief of staff, by a group of revolutionary sailors.

In Petrograd the official agents of the Entente, especially the French military mission, hand in hand with the Social-Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks, began openly to organize resistance from the second day of the Soviet coup d'état, by mobilizing, arming and inciting to attack us the officers, cadets and the bourgeoisie youth generally.

The rising of these cadets on November 10 was the cause of a hundred times more victims than the coup d'état of November 7.

Leo or Leon Trotsky, the Bolshevik Minister of War, is co-dictator of Russia with Lenin. This one time newspaper man who lived in New York is accounted the brains of the Red regime. His headquarters is the historic Kremlin in Moscow, though much of his time is spent in a palatial special train one owned by the Czar and now fitted as his military headquarters.



LEO TROTSKY, BOLSHEVIST MINISTER OF WAR

possibility of conducting a literary discussion about the relative truth with those who are just now "criticizing" us with the aid of every kind of lethal weapon. Furthermore, our object is not to punish bars and encourage the speakers of truth in the press of all shades, but to crush the class of the bourgeoisie and secure the triumph of the proletariat and the most "bloodless" of all revolutions possible in this wicked world.

This sentence in time, which at first glance seems the most "natural" and which in any case would have been the most advantageous to the Russian working class, was not realized, not through any fault of ours, but because of the march of events. Instead of being the last the Russian proletariat turned out to be the first. It was just this fact that gave—after the first period of confusion—its desperate character to the resistance of the former governing classes of Russia and forced the Russian proletariat in a time of the greatest danger of external attack and internal plots and risings to resort to the cruel measure of state terrorism.

No one is likely to say now that this measure proved infelicitous. But perhaps some people will demand that it be considered "inadmissible."

**Upholds Resort to Any Means for Retaining Their Power.**  
The working class, having fought their way to power, were faced by the problem and the duty of consolidating and securing that power in the policy of beating the will to counter-revolution out of their enemies, and so of securing for themselves the possibility of carrying out Socialist reforms. The only means that would have been no point in their seizure of power.

A revolution does not "logically" demand terrorism just as it does not "logically" demand armed risings. What a pompous banality! But a revolution does demand of the revolutionary class that they achieve their purpose by any means at their disposal; if necessary, by an armed rising; if necessary, by terrorism.

The revolutionary class, which with arms in their hands gained power, are obliged to wrest power from their grasp. Where they have against them a hostile army, they will set against their own army. Where they have against them an armed plot, an assassination, a rising, they will let loose stern punishment on the heads of their enemies.

The question of the form or degree of repression is of course not a question of principle, but of feasibility. In time of revolution the party that has been ousted from power, that cannot reconcile itself to the permanence of the party in power, and that displays this state of mind by its bitter struggle against the latter, cannot be frightened by the threat of imprisonment, because it does not believe that the imprisonment will be long. It is just this simple but decisive fact that explains the general use of shooting in civil war.

Terror is impotent—and then only "in the long run"—only when applied by reaction against a historically rising class. But terrorism may be extremely effective against a reactionary class that does not want to quit the scene of action. Fear is a mighty instrument of both foreign and domestic policy. War, like revolution, is based on frightening people.

law remained revolutionaries after getting into power. In order that human beings may become sacred, the social order which crucifies them must be destroyed. And that can only be done by blood and iron.

There is another difference between the White Terror and the Red that is of decisive importance for Marxists. The White Terror is the instrument of a historically reactionary class. When we exposed the uselessness of repression on the part of a bourgeois state dealing with the proletariat we never denied the fact that by arrests and punishments the ruling classes might temporarily check the development of the social revolution.

**Says the Bourgeoisie Is Ruining Civilization of the Whole World.**  
But we were convinced that they could not stop it. We based ourselves on the fact that the proletariat is the historically rising class and that bourgeoisie society cannot develop without and against the same time increasing the strength of the proletariat. The bourgeoisie in the present epoch is a sinking class. It not only no longer plays an essential part in production, but by its imperialist methods of acquisition it ruins the world's economic order and pains human civilization.

Nevertheless, the tenacity of the bourgeoisie is colossal. It hangs on and does not want to go. By this very fact it threatens to drag all society with it over the abyss.

The bourgeoisie must be torn out, cut off. The Red Terror is an instrument used against a class doomed to go under, and that does not want to go under.

If the White Terror can only delay the rise of the proletariat, the Red Terror can hasten the disappearance of the bourgeoisie. Acceleration—increasing the tempo—is a matter of decisive importance in some phases of history. Without the Red Terror the Russian bourgeoisie, together with that of the world, would have strangled us long before the revolution came in Europe. One must be blind not to see this, or a fatalist of facts to deny it.

Whoever accuses revolutionary historic significance to the very fact of the existence of the Soviet system must sanction the Red Terror.

The Bolsheviks have done a great historic deed in holding out for two years against the united capitalist world. But the Bolsheviks did not hold out through ideas only, but by the sword.

## Wholesale Slaughter His Boast, and Prediction Is Made All Nations Will Fall Before Onslaught of Bolshevism

"With the arms made by himself in his hands, the worker is placed in a situation where the political fate of the State depends directly upon him. Those who in normal times oppress and despised him now flatter him and try to curry favor. At the same time he comes into intimate contact with those very cannon which, according to Lassalle, form the keystone of the constitution. Even if he advanced among the workers were theoretically aware of the fact that force is the midwife of right, their political thinking nevertheless remained permeated with the spirit of possibilism and accommodation to bourgeois legality. Now the worker is learning in practice to despise this legality and to destroy it by force. The static attitude of mind gives way to the dynamic. Heavy artillery thunders the idea into his head that in cases where it is impossible to go round an obstacle, the possibility remains of smashing it. Almost the whole adult male population has been put through the school of war, fearful in its social realism, that is creating a new human type.

"The clenched fist of iron necessity is now raised above all the norms of bourgeois society—over its law, its morality and its religion. 'Necessity knows no law' said the German Chancellor on August 4, 1914. Monarchs came down into the market places in order to accuse each other of lying, after the manner of fishes. Governments trampled on the obligations they had solemnly recognized and the National Church chanted its Lord God, like a coward, to the national cannon.

"It is not obvious that such conditions must give rise to profound changes in working class psychology and radically cure the workmen of the hypnosis of legality which was cast upon them during a period of political stagnation? The properties classes will soon, to their horror, have the occasion to convince themselves of this.

### Will Use Language of Force on Meeting of the First Obstacle.

"The proletariat, graduates of the school of war, will feel the need of talking the language of force at the first serious obstacle they meet within their own countries. 'Necessity knows no law'; they will throw that phrase in the faces of those who try to stop them with the laws of bourgeois legality. And the most serious obstacles which will gradually appear during the war, and especially after its end, will drive the masses to break many and many laws."

All this is indisputable. But to what has been said must be added this, that the war exercised no less influence on the minds of the governing classes; in proportion as the masses became more exigent the classes have grown more intransigent.

In peace time the capitalists used to look after their interests by "peaceful" robbery of wage labor. During the war they served these same interests by destroying countless human lives. This has given their economic self-consciousness a new "Napoleonic" taint. During the war capitalists grew accustomed to sending to their deaths millions of slaves of their own race and from the colonies, for the sake of coal, railways and other forms of gain.

During the war hundreds of thousands of officers were drawn from the great, middle and small bourgeois. These officers are professional warriors, men whose character has received a military temper and been released from all external restraints—qualified legionaries, ready and able to defend with a recklessness that in its way borders on the heroic the privileged position of the bourgeoisie that trained them.

The revolution would probably be more humane if the proletariat were able to "buy off" this band of Marx once put it. But during the war capitalism put too heavy a burden of debts on the workers and broke up the apparatus of production too thoroughly to make it possible to speak seriously of a ransom that would cause the masses to accept the new order. The masses have lost too much blood, have suffered too much and grown too embittered to permit of such a decision, which in any case would be beyond their economic strength.

### Sees a Divergent Reflex of the Great Middle Classes.

To this must be added other circumstances, all tending in the same direction. The bourgeoisie of the defeated countries has been enraged by its defeat, the responsibility for which it is inclined to put on the workers and peasants, who should themselves be incapable of bringing the "great national war" to a victorious conclusion. From this point of view it is very instructive to read the explanations, marvellous in their insolence, given by Ludendorff to the commission of the National Assembly.

The Ludendorff bands are burning to avenge themselves for their humiliations abroad on the blood of their own proletariat. As for the bourgeoisie of the victorious countries, it is filled with arrogance and reads than ever to defend its social position by the use of the bestial measures with which it secured itself victory.

Written on the blank wall of the future I see the words *Mene, mene, tekel uharshin*, but our enemies see them not, for they are blind and will not believe those who have eyes; while, in any case, not even the gods themselves can treat the march of fate.

As for the position in Europe generally, we see that the international bourgeoisie have shown that they are incapable of organizing, without war and ruin, a distribution among themselves of their ill gotten spoils. Can they agree, without fighting, to relinquish those spoils altogether? The experiences of the last five years leaves not the slightest doubt on this score.

If, even before the war, it was sheer Cynicism to expect that the expropriation of the propertied classes could be carried out quietly and painlessly, without risings, armed conflicts, attempts at counter-revolution and harsh repressions, the situation created by the imperialistic war will render doubly and trebly fierce that near and unavoidable civil strife of which there can be one and only one termination—the dictatorship of the proletariat.

LEO TROTSKY.  
The Kremlin, Moscow, Oct. 5, 1920.