

Seventy years ago the workers of Petrograd, led by Lenin and the Bolshevik party, stormed the Winter Palace, toppled the Provisional government and thus launched the first successful proletarian revolution. The October Revolution came in the midst of the First World War when millions of lives were sacrificed by rival bands of imperialist predators. In most countries of Europe the so-called socialist leaders of the workers had made themselves accomplices of this greatest of crimes, and called upon the oppressed to fight and die in the interests of their own exploiters. Only in Russia had the revolutionary communists been capable of forging a really revolutionary party willing and capable of leading the proletariat and the masses through the complexities of the revolutionary situation and forward to the assault on the old order.

The October Revolution is perhaps a misnomer, since the heroic deeds of October were but the prelude to years of bitter and bloody fighting against the old reactionary forces aided and buttressed by a whole slew of imperialist powers. In a bigger sense, October 1917 was the declaration of war of the whole international proletariat on the reactionary social order all over the world.

The revolutionaries of Russia had hoped to be followed by the workers of Europe, who themselves were suffering tremendously as a result of the war. Indeed, a big wave of revolutionary struggle spread over Europe in the wake of October. But the stranglehold of opportunism on the workers movement, as well as the remaining strength of the capitalists themselves,

proved too great and the attempts at revolution in Europe were beaten back.

Nevertheless, the Russian Revolution did serve as the clarion call to the workers of all countries as well as to the oppressed peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America who were subjugated by a handful of imperialist powers. The workers all over the world came to the support of the young socialist state. Founded in the wake of October, the Communist International spread Leninism to every corner of the earth and helped organise proletarian revolutionary parties in dozens of countries.

The October Revolution came to stand for the *dictatorship of the proletariat*. Unlike previous states, the proletarian state openly proclaimed its class character — a dictatorship of the oppressed and exploited led by the proletariat over the bourgeoisie and the landlords.

WINDS OF OCTOBER



Only a state genuinely in the interests of the vast majority of the people could so avow its colours.

From the beginning, the imperialist ruling classes and all reactionaries showed both fear and contempt for the socialist state. No lie was too outrageous, no manoeuvre too vile in their efforts to isolate and strangle the USSR led by Lenin and Stalin. Yet despite all this the proletariat of the USSR continued to persevere in its class dictatorship and in

STILL BLOW



the construction of a new socialist industry and agriculture. The socialist state was later able to stand up to the full fury of German imperialism directed against it during the Second World War.

Thus it can be seen that the workers of Petrograd were opening a whole new chapter in the history of mankind. Their guns blazed the way not only for the success of the revolution in Russia but in other countries as well, most notably in China, where Mao Tsetung led the proletariat and people in waging a protracted peoples' war against imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism.

We must affirm today that the October Revolution has in no way lost its historical impetus. Indeed, life itself proves again and again the value of its example and its lessons. The road of October, of the proletariat's seizure of political power by the force of arms, remains valid for all countries, even if the forms and process of this armed seizure of power will differ greatly in the different types of countries.

Today the Soviet Union no longer belongs to the proletariat. A new bourgeoisie which grew up in the socialist society itself was able to seize political power

and restore capitalism even while sometimes maintaining the thinnest of "socialist" masks. The USSR today is no longer the bastion of revolution that it was under Lenin and Stalin. Today it is a vicious and dangerous social-imperialist predator which is sucking the blood of workers and peasants in many parts of the world, suppressing revolution and actively preparing for a third world war. The Soviet revisionists have betrayed and trampled on the October Revolution and it saddens the hearts of genuine communists everywhere to see the chauvinist, militaristic displays of these social-imperialists soiling the very streets where our predecessors spilt their blood hoisting the red flag of revolution.

It was Mao Tsetung who was able to correctly understand how it was possible for a new bourgeoisie to arise under socialism and attempt to overthrow the dictatorship of the proletariat. On the basis of summing up the bitter defeat in the USSR as well as the experience in China itself, he was able to develop the theory of continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat and launch the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. Today it is impossible to truly uphold the October Revolution without also upholding the lessons of the Cultural Revolution, just as it is impossible to uphold Leninism without upholding Mao Tsetung Thought.

In today's momentous times, when both the danger of a third imperialist world war as well as the opportunities for revolution are increasing, the lessons and example of October are all the more vital. Armed with Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought the revolutionary communists of every country must lead the workers and oppressed further still along the road that began in Petrograd in 1917, reached its highest pinnacle to date with the Cultural Revolution, and will be completed only when the very existence of classes and oppression has been eliminated from the face of the earth. □

Citizens!
 Today a thousand years of "Former Times" have collapsed.
 Today the foundation of worlds is being reexamined.

Today
 We will transform life anew down to the last button on our clothing.

Citizens!
 This is the first day of the workers' deluge.

We are coming of this confused world.
 To the rescue of the clatter of their feet into the heavens.
 Let the fleets assist the fury with their sirens.

— Vladimir Mayakovsky

Streets of Petrograd in the hands of workers, students, soldiers and sailors.



This proclamation appears on the walls of Petrograd announcing the flight of the Kerensky provisional government and control of Petrograd by the Bolsheviks.



Отъ Военно-Революціоннаго Комитета или Петроградскаго Совѣта
Рабочихъ и Солдатскихъ Депутатовъ.

Къ Гражданамъ Россіи

Временное Правительство низложено. Государственная власть перешла въ руки органа Петроградскаго Совѣта Рабочихъ и Солдатскихъ Депутатовъ Военно-Революціоннаго Комитета, стоящаго во главѣ Петроградскаго пролетариата и гарнизона.

Дѣло, за которое боролся народъ: немедленное предложение демократическаго мира, отмена помещичьей собственности на землю, рабочий контроль надъ производствомъ, созданіе Совѣтскаго Правительства — это дѣло обезпечено.

ДА ЗДРАВСТВУЕТЪ РЕВОЛЮЦІЯ РАБОЧИХЪ, СОЛДАТЪ И КРЕСТЬЯНЪ!

Военно-Революціонный Комитетъ
или Петроградскій Совѣтъ
Рабочихъ и Солдатскихъ Депутатовъ

25 октября 1917 г. № 1. 1778.

*Beat on the street the march of rebellion,
Sweeping over the heads of the proud;
We, the flood of a second deluge,
Shall wash the world like a bursting cloud.*

*Days are a bright steed;
Years drag glum;
Our great god is Speed!
Our heart a bellowing drum!*

*What is richer than our colours?
Can we be caught by the bullet's sting?
For rifles and bayonets we have ballads;
Our gold is our voices' ring!*

*Green meadows grow,
Days burst by —
Rainbow, curve your bow!
Hurrying horses, fly!*

— Vladimir Mayakovsky

Photo captions for pages 40-41.

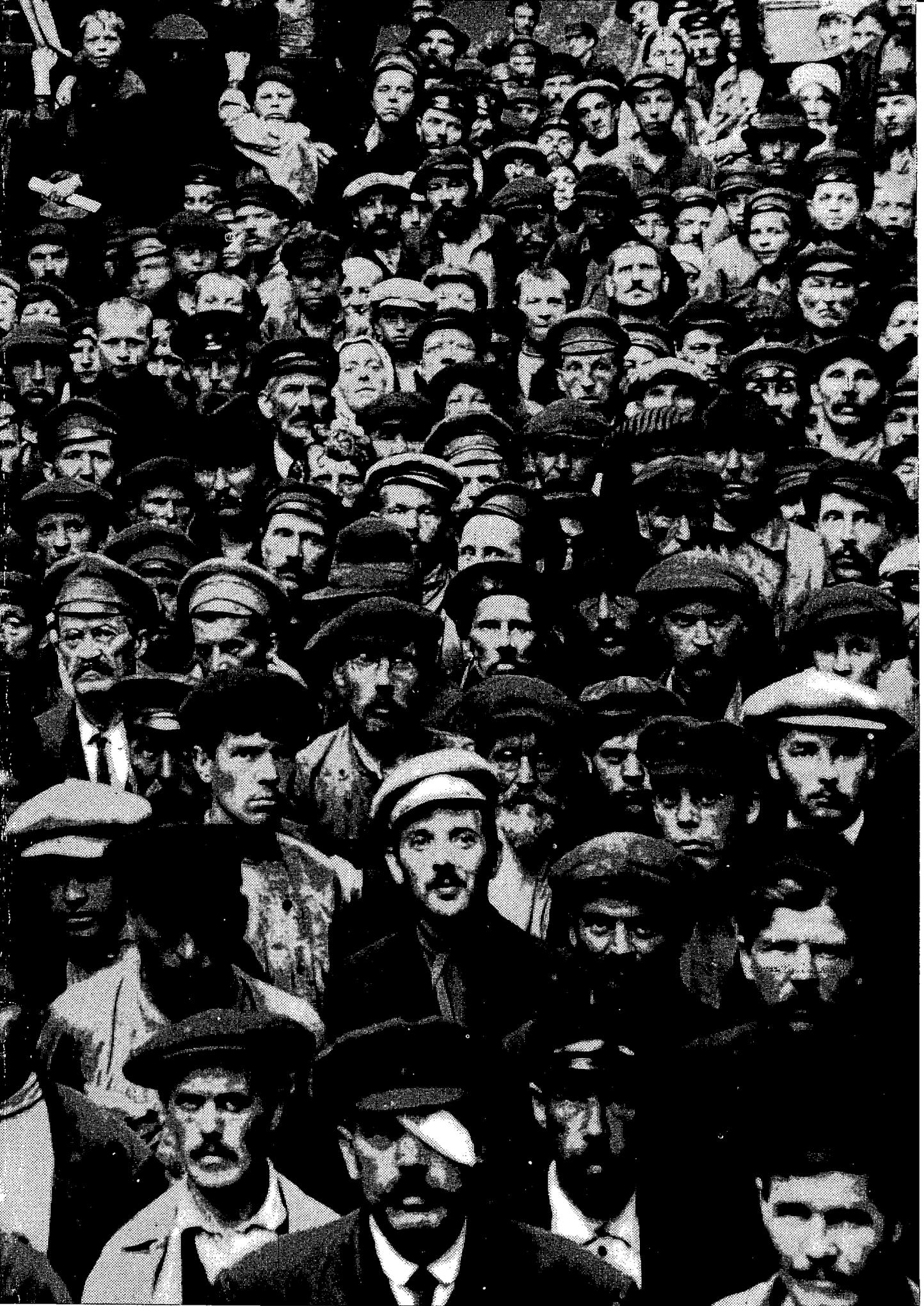
1. Fraternisation of Russian and German soldiers.
2. Anti-war demonstration in July, 1917. Kerensky troops opened fire on demonstrators.
3. Aurora, poised, ready to aid Red Army in the seizure of the Winter Palace.
4. Workers of Petrograd.



So we came into the great meeting-hall, pushing through the clamorous mob at the door. In the rows of seats, under the white chandeliers, packed immovably in the aisles and on the sides, perched on every window-sill, and even the edge of the platform, the representatives of the workers and soldiers of all Russia waited in anxious silence or wild exultation the ringing of the chairman's bell. There was no heat in the hall but the stifling heat of unwashed human bodies. A foul blue cloud of cigarette smoke rose from the mass and hung in the thick air. Occasionally someone in authority mounted the tribune and asked the comrades not to smoke; then everybody, smokers and all, took up the cry, "Don't smoke, comrades!" and went on smoking. Petrovsky, Anarchist delegate from the Obukhov factory, made a seat for me beside him. Unshaven and filthy, he was reeling from three nights' sleepless work on the Military Revolutionary Committee.

It was just 8:40 when a thundering wave of cheers announced the entrance of the presidium, with Lenin — great Lenin — among them. A short, stocky figure, with a big head set down on his shoulders, bald and bulging. Little eyes, a snubbish nose, wide generous mouth, and heavy chin; clean-shaven now but already beginning to bristle with the well-known beard of his past and future. Dressed in shabby clothes, his trousers much too long for him. Unimpressive, to be the idol of a mob, loved and revered as perhaps few leaders in history have been ... without picturesque idiosyncrasies — but with the power of explaining profound ideas in simple terms, of analysing a concrete situation. And combined with shrewdness, the greatest intellectual audacity....

Selections from John Reed's *Ten Days That Shook the World*



Now Lenin, gripping the edge of the reading stand, letting his little winking eyes travel over the crowd as he stood there waiting, apparently oblivious to the long-rolling ovation, which lasted several minutes. When it finished, he said simply, "We shall now proceed to construct the Socialist order!" Again that overwhelming human roar.

"The first thing is the adoption of practical measures to realize peace.... We shall offer peace to the peoples of all the belligerent countries upon the basis of the Soviet terms — no annexations, no indemnities, and the right of self-determination of peoples. At the same time, according to our promise, we shall publish and repudiate the secret treaties.... The question of War and Peace is so clear that I think that I may, without preamble, read the project of a Proclamation to the Peoples of All the Belligerent Countries...."

[Proclamation follows]

"... This proposal of peace will meet with resistance on the part of the imperialist governments — we don't fool ourselves on that score. But we hope that revolution will soon break out in all the belligerent countries; that is why we address ourselves to the workers of France, England, and Germany...."

"The revolution of 6 and 7 November," he ended, "has opened the era of the Social Revolution... The labour movement, in the name of Peace and Socialism, shall win, and fulfill its destiny...."

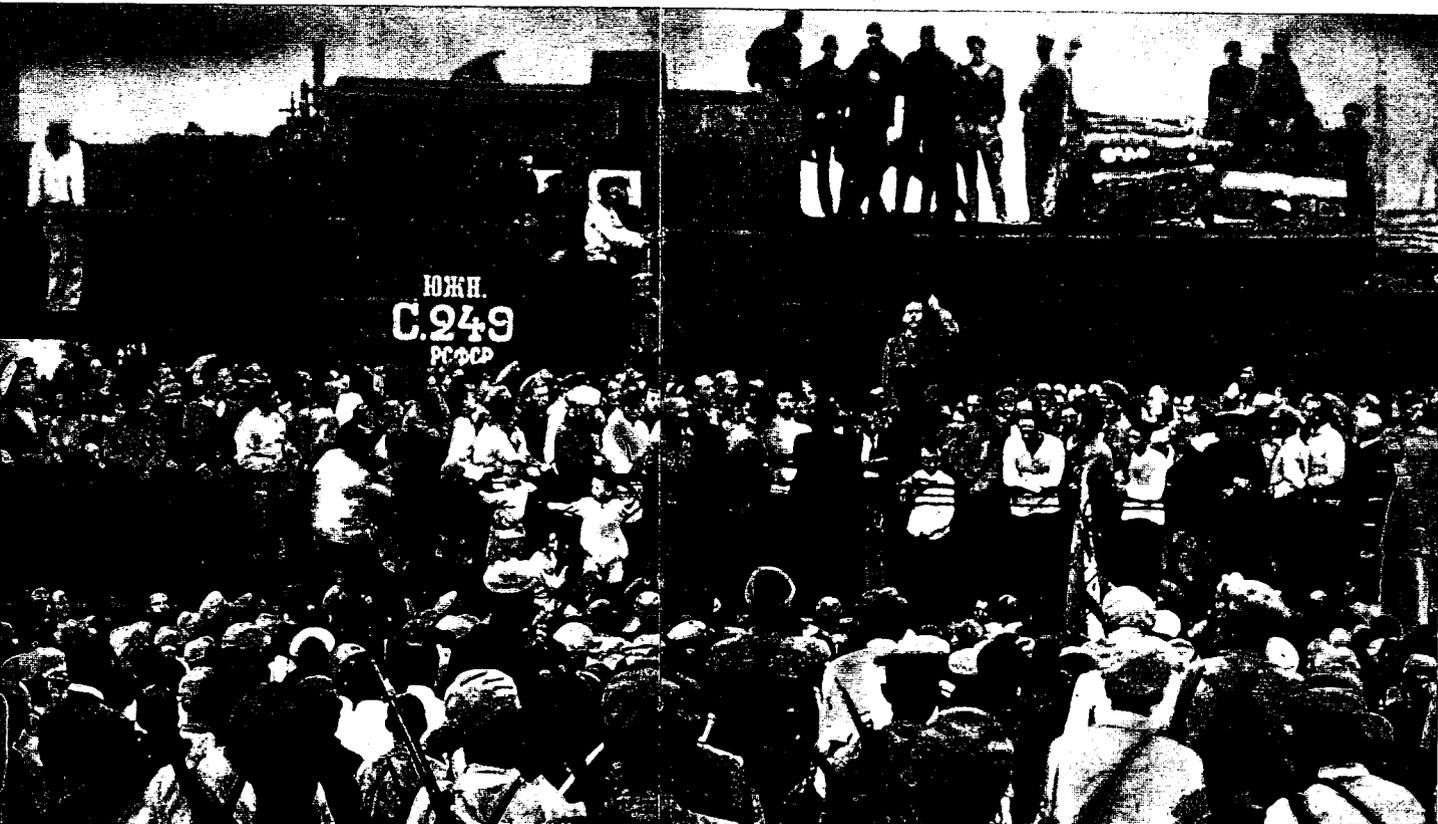
* Dates have changed because a different calendar was used under the Tsar.

There was something quiet and powerful in all this, which stirred the souls of men. It was understandable why people believed when Lenin spoke....

"We want a just peace, but we are not afraid of a revolutionary war... Probably the imperialist Governments will not answer our appeal — but we shall not issue an ultimatum to which it will be easy to say no.... If the German proletariat realizes that we are ready to consider all offers of peace, that will perhaps be the last drop which overflows the bowl — revolution will break out in Germany...."

Suddenly, by common impulse, we found ourselves on our feet, mumbling together into the smooth lifting unison of the *Internationale*. A grizzled old soldier was sobbing like a child. Alexandra Kollontai rapidly winked the tears back. The immense sound rolled through the hall, burst windows and doors and soared into the quiet sky. "The war is ended! The war is ended!" said a young workman near me, his face shining. And when it was over, as we stood there in a kind of awkward hush, someone in the back of the room shouted, "Comrades! Let us remember those who have died for liberty!" So we began to sing the Funeral March, that slow, melancholy, and yet triumphant chant.... The Funeral March seemed the very soul of those dark masses whose delegates sat in this hall, building from their obscure visions a new Russia — and perhaps more.

Selections from Reed's *Ten Days That Shook the World*



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**THE
TRANSFORMATION
OF THE PRESENT
IMPERIALIST
WAR INTO A
CIVIL WAR IS
THE ONLY
CORRECT
PROLETARIAN
SLOGAN.**

Lenin



Mariategui on October

The people and the army wanted the revolution to give them peace. Kerensky's inability to do so aroused the army against the government. Unlike the other armies with which it was allied, the Russian Army did not believe in the myth that the war was between democracy and autocracy, because Russia's war had been led by the tsarist autocracy. The army was tired of the war and silently craved peace. The Bolsheviks correctly based their propaganda on the people's sentiments. They called for an immediate redistribution of the land. They told the proletariat, "Neither of these things can be accomplished by a coalition government that includes the bourgeoisie. This government must be replaced by a proletarian government, by a workers' government, by a government of the parties of the working class. Such a government can only be a Soviet government. The Bolsheviks' war cry was, 'All power to the Soviets!'"

— Speech given to the Student Federation in Lima, Peru, 13 July 1923 by José Carlos Mariategui

I had thought the revolution was loved by everyone; I had thought to find a brave new world beyond the border; I found the collapse of an old world under whose ruins men were dying. But living among those ruins were men who were building a new world from the broken pieces under which all the armies of the earth had sought to bury them. The armies had made chaos; but there were creators in chaos! They were men like flames in the mist, signalling each other till fog dissolves in light!

My desire for this new land strengthened into a passion. Here was a real job, the biggest job in the world. I was going to be one of those creators in chaos....

"There is nothing impossible," said Sonia in clear, firm tones. Sonia shared my cabin; she was the interpreter they had found for me in Moscow, a communist giving her month's vacation to famine work. She was born in England of Russian exiles and came to Russia with the revolution. England

made her a textile worker; Russia made her a soldier on the Polish front and a commissar in a military hospital. Twice she had been wounded in battle; she had had typhus, smallpox and malaria. She had always carried with her a tiny revolver "in case they capture me and find out that I am a woman...."

"I also have thought in the past that there were impossible things," continued Sonia. "For eight months I ran a typhus hospital where a thousand men lay on wooden floors that could not be disinfected. The men had been in dirt so long that we had to cut the clothes from them; they were rotten with filth that crumbled in your hands. The lice were imbedded in their flesh; you had to scrub hard or use a razor to get them off. We had no beds, no mattresses, no sheets, no blankets, no soap. The doctors and nurses came down with typhus regularly in fourteen days; there was no possible way to protect them; when they took hold of those men you knew they would most of them be sick with typhus in two weeks.

"I thought it was impossible. But always something can be done. We commandeered a big school-building — the only building big enough for our sick. We took a great wooden tank that was used for washing clothes, and we scrubbed the men in it. We sent word throughout the city (it was a town of



The Russian empire is dying
 There are neither the silky sounds of skirts at the
 Winter Palace
 Nor the tsar's prayers at Easter
 Nor the cry of chains on the road to Siberia...
 Dying, the Russian Empire is dying...
 No longer will the yellow mustaches of pomechiks
 get wet in vodka glasses
 No longer will the copper beards of mujiks dying
 of hunger
 burn on the black soil like a handful of blood

And Today
 The death
 that is approaching the Russian Empire
 Has neither a yellow head
 Nor a pitchfork
 In his hands is a lively red flag
 And on his cheeks the blood of youth

Nineteen hundred seventeen
 The Seventh of November
 With his soft and deep voice
 Lenin said:
 "Yesterday was too early tomorrow too late,
 The time is today."
 The soldier coming from the front
 said: "today!"
 The trench that killed death out of hunger
 said "today!"
 With its heavy steel black
 cannons, the *Aurora*
 said: "today!" —
 said: "today!" —
 And so wrote the Bolsheviki in history
 the date of history's most profound turning point:
 Nineteen hundred seventeen,
 the seventh of November

Nazim Hikmet 1925



thirty-five thousand souls) asking every family to bring us one suit of underwear for the men who were left naked when we cut their clothing off. From most it was a free gift, but communists, of course, were not permitted to refuse. They must give, even if they have no underwear left for themselves. We communists are making the revolution; we must do whatever is demanded." She spoke of the revolution not as a violent upheaval in the past, but as a process yet unfinished.

"...There is always a way. There may not be an easy way, or a way that is sparing of life, but there is always a way through. This famine is nothing compared to the wars of intervention, except that we're much more tired.... Now that we've beaten the intervention, don't think this famine can stop us."

"Millions will die," I said to Sonia.

And Sonia answered: "Millions have already died."

I wondered if she was thinking only of the millions who died in the wars of intervention, out of whose deaths had been won the independence of the revolution, or also of the millions who had died in Europe, to no end but the profits of the war-lords and the ghastly peace of Versailles. Millions would die; but these communists who held together would win through.

From *I Change Worlds* by Anna Louise Strong .

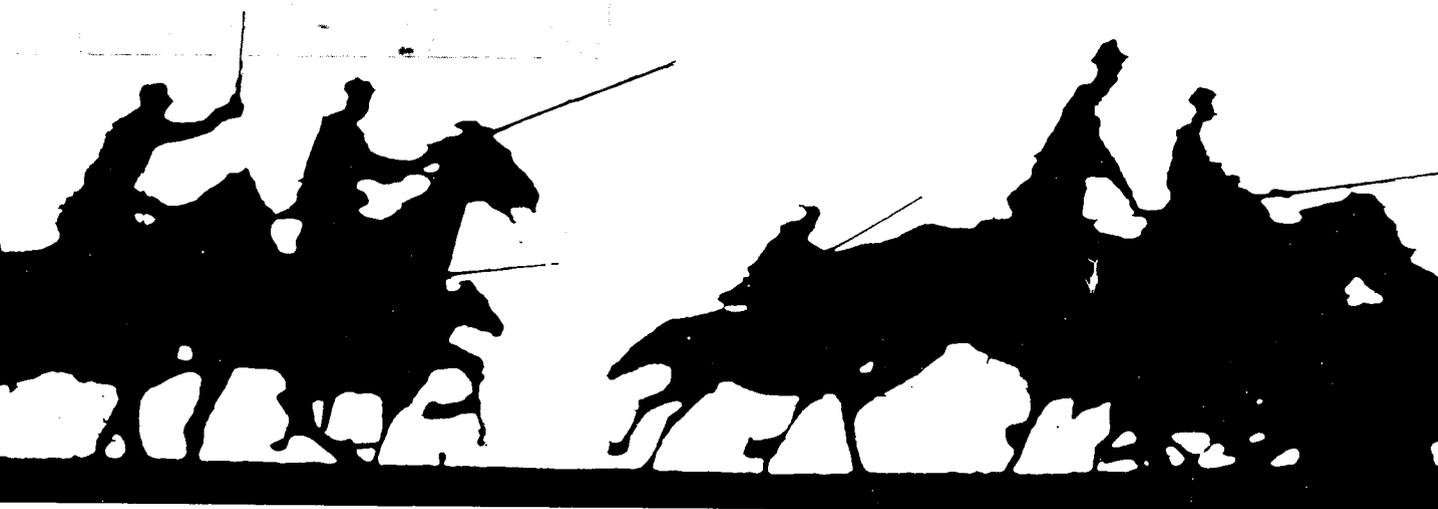
I, a son of the working people and citizen of the Soviet Republic, accept the title of soldier in the peasants' and workers' army. I commit myself to strictly observing revolutionary discipline. I commit myself to the cause of socialism, giving to it all my energy and my life....



As we came out into the dark and gloomy hall all around the grey horizon factory whistles were blowing, a hoarse and nervous sound, full of foreboding. By tens of thousands the working-people poured out, men and women; by tens of thousands the humming slums belched out their dun and miserable hordes. Red Petrograd was in danger! Cossacks! South and south-west they poured through the shabby streets towards the Moskovsky Gate, men, women, and children, with rifles, picks, spades, rolls of wire, cartridge-belts over their working clothes.... Such an immense, spontaneous outpouring of a city was never seen! They rolled along torrent-like, companies of soldiers borne with them, guns, motor-trucks, wagons — the revolutionary proletariat defending with its breast the capital of the Workers' and Peasants' Republic!...

Day broke, and the pickets of Kerensky's Cossacks came in touch. Scattered rifle-fire, summons to surrender. Over the bleak plain on the cold quiet air spread the sound of battle, falling upon the ears of roving bands as they gathered about their little fires, waiting.... So it was beginning! They made towards the battle; and the worker hordes pouring out along the straight roads quickened their pace... Thus upon all the points of attack automatically converged angry human swarms, to be met by Commissars and assigned positions, or work to do. This was *their* battle, for *their* world; the officers in command were elected by *them*. For the moment that incoherent multiple will was one will....

Those who participated in the fighting described to me how the sailors fought until they ran out of cartridges, and then stormed; how the untrained workmen rushed the charging Cossacks and tore them from their horses; how the anonymous hordes of the people, gathering in the darkness around the battle, rose like a tide and poured over the enemy.... Before midnight of Monday the Cossacks broke and were fleeing, leaving their artillery behind them, and the army of the proletariat, on a long ragged front, moved forward and rolled into Tsarskoye, before the enemy had a chance to destroy the great Government wireless station, from which now the Commissars of Smolny were hurling out to the world paeans of triumph....



On 15 October I had a conversation with a great Russian capitalist, Stepan Georgevich Lianozov, known as the "Russian Rockefeller" — a Cadet by political faith.

"Revolution," he said, "is a sickness. Sooner or later the foreign powers must intervene here — as one would intervene to cure a sick child, and teach it how to walk. Of course, it would be more or less improper, but the nations must realize the danger of Bolsheviki in their own countries — such contagious ideas as 'proletarian dictatorship,' and 'world social revolution'... There is a chance that this intervention may not be necessary. Transportation is demoralised, the factories are closing down, and the Germans are advancing. Starvation and defeat may bring the Russian people to their senses."

...To Americans it is incredible that the class war should develop to such a pitch. But I have personally met officers on the Northern Front who frankly preferred military disaster to cooperation with the Soldier's Committees. The secretary of the Petrograd branch of the Cadet party told me that the breakdown of the country's economic life was part of a campaign to discredit the Revolution....

A large section of the propertied classes preferred the Germans to the Revolution — even to the Provisional Government — and didn't hesitate to say so. In the Russian household where I lived, the subject of conversation at the dinner-table was almost invariably the coming of the Germans, bringing "law and order"... One evening I spent at the house of a Moscow merchant; during tea we asked the eleven people at the table whether they preferred "Wilhelm or the Bolsheviki." The vote was ten to one for Wilhelm....

Selections from Reed's
Ten Days That Shook the World

A bourgeois, a lonely mourner,
His nose tucked in his ragged fur,
Stands lost and idle on the corner,
Tagged by a cringing, mangy cur.

The bourgeois like a hungry mongrel,—
A silent question—stands and begs.
The old world like a kinless mongrel
Stands there, its tail between its legs.

— Alexander Blok



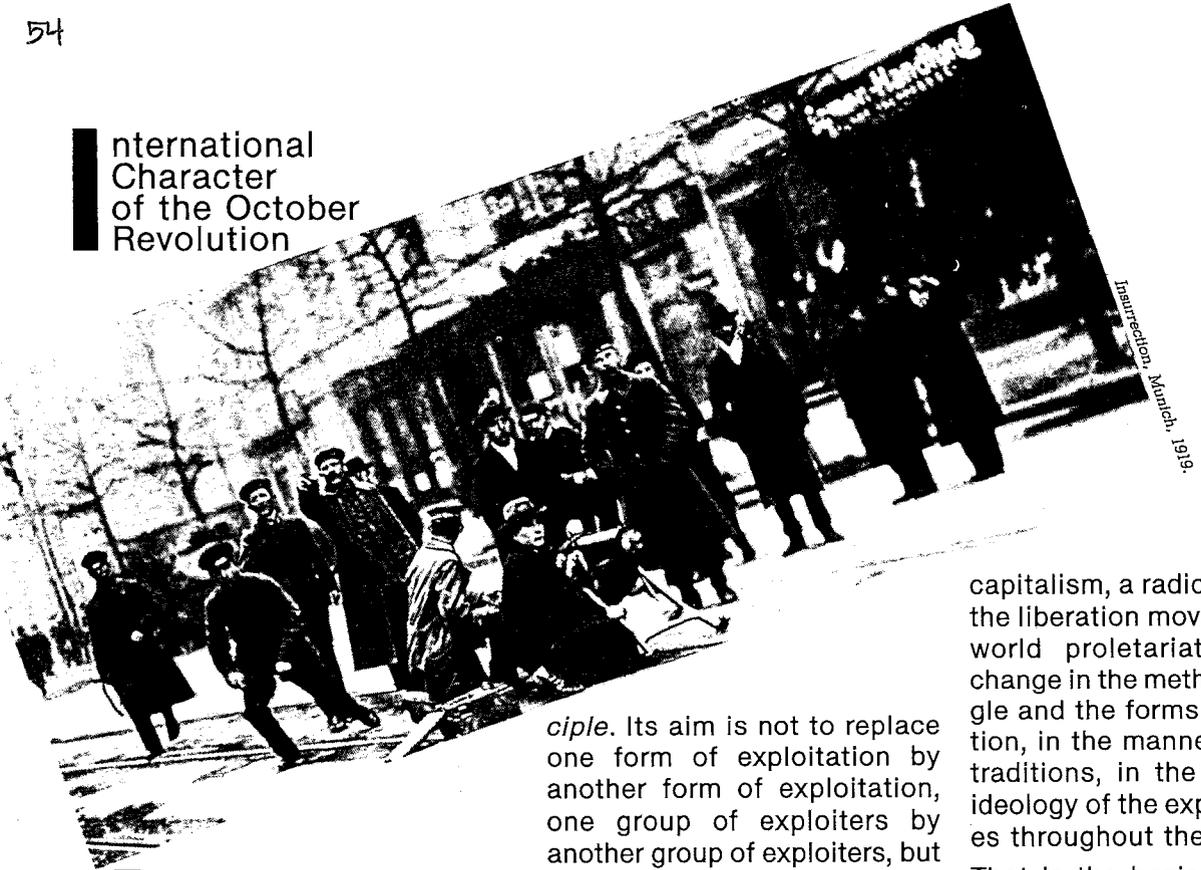
**ТОВ. ЛЕНИН ОЧИЩАЕТ
ЗЕМЛЮ ОТ НЕЧИСТИ.**



It was through the Russians that the Chinese found Marxism. Before the October Revolution, the Chinese were not only ignorant of Lenin and Stalin, they did not even know of Marx and Engels. The salvos of the October Revolution brought us Marxism-Leninism. The October Revolution helped progressives in China, as throughout the world, adopt the proletarian world outlook...”

— “On the People’s Democratic Dictatorship,” Mao Tsetung

International Character of the October Revolution



Insurrection, Nanchang, 1919.

The October Revolution cannot be regarded merely as a revolution "within national bounds." It is, primarily, a revolution of an international, world order; for it signifies a radical turn in the world history of mankind, a turn from the old, capitalist world to the new, socialist world.

Revolutions in the past usually ended by one group of exploiters at the helm of government being replaced by another group of exploiters. The exploiters changed, exploitation remained. Such was the case during the liberation movements of the slaves. Such was the case during the period of the uprisings of the serfs. Such was the case during the period of the well-known "great" revolutions in England, France and Germany. I am not speaking of the Paris Commune, which was the first glorious, heroic, yet unsuccessful attempt on the part of the proletariat to turn history against capitalism.

The October Revolution differs from these revolutions *in prin-*

ciple. Its aim is not to replace one form of exploitation by another form of exploitation, one group of exploiters by another group of exploiters, but to abolish all exploitation of man by man, to abolish all groups of exploiters, to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat, to establish the power of the most revolutionary class of all the oppressed classes that have ever existed, to organise a new, classless, socialist society.

It is precisely for this reason that the *victory* of the October Revolution signifies a radical change in the history of mankind, a radical change in the historical destiny of world

capitalism, a radical change in the liberation movement of the world proletariat, a radical change in the methods of struggle and the forms of organisation, in the manner of life and traditions, in the culture and ideology of the exploited masses throughout the world.

That is the basic reason why the October Revolution is a revolution of an international, world order.

That also is the source of the profound sympathy which the oppressed classes in all countries entertain for the October Revolution, which they regard as a pledge of their own emancipation.

...The October Revolution is noteworthy primarily for having breached the front of world imperialism, for having overthrown the imperialist

Peasant revolts in China during 1919.



bourgeoisie in one of the biggest capitalist countries and put the socialist proletariat in power.

The class of wage-workers, the class of the persecuted, the class of the oppressed and exploited has *for the first time* in the history of mankind risen to the position of the *ruling class*, setting a contagious example to the proletarians of all countries.

This means that the October Revolution *has ushered in* a new era, the era of *proletarian revolutions* in countries of *imperialism*...

Having overthrown the landlords and the capitalists, the October Revolution broke the chains of national and colonial oppression and freed from it, without exception, all the oppressed peoples of a vast state. The proletariat cannot emancipate itself unless it emancipates the oppressed peoples. It is a characteristic feature of the October Revolution that it accomplished these national-colonial revolutions in the USSR not under the flag of national enmity and conflicts among nations, but under the flag of mutual confidence and



fraternal rapprochement of the workers and peasants of the various peoples in the USSR, not in the name of *nationalism*, but in the name of *internationalism*.

It is precisely because the national-colonial revolutions took place in our country under the leadership of the proletariat and under the banner of internationalism that pariah peoples, slave peoples, have *for the first time* in the history of mankind risen to the position of peoples that are *really free and really equal*, thereby setting a contagious example to the oppressed nations of the whole world.

This means that the October Revolution *has ushered in* a new era, the era of *colonial revolutions* which are being carried out in the *oppressed coun-*

tries of the world in alliance with the proletariat and under the leadership of the proletariat ...

While shaking imperialism, the October Revolution has at the same time created — in the shape of the first proletarian dictatorship — a powerful and open *base* for the world revolutionary movement, a base such as the latter *never possessed* before and on which it now can rely for support. It has created a powerful and open *centre* of the world revolutionary movement, such as the latter *never possessed* before and around which it can now rally, organising a *united revolutionary front of the proletarians and of the oppressed peoples of all countries against imperialism*...

The International Character of the October Revolution, Joseph Stalin (November 1927)

After the October Revolution, French sailors mutinied in the Black Sea against French participation in the imperialist encirclement of Soviet Russia.

