

HENRY WILLIAM LEE

BOLSHEVISM: A CURSE &
DANGER TO THE
WORKERS

Henry William Lee

**Bolshevism: A Curse &
Danger to the Workers**

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H. W. Lee

Bolshevism: A Curse & Danger to the Workers

FOREWORD BY WILL THORNE, M.P

I have been asked to write a brief introduction to the pamphlet which my old friend and comrade H.W. Lee has written on the undercurrent of Bolshevik propaganda going on in this country, of which the recent unauthorised strike outbreaks are outward and visible signs. I do this gladly. Our comrade Lee, through being long associated with the Social-Democratic Federation as its Secretary, and his editorship of "Justice" during the last five years, has gained a knowledge of International Socialist movements in their many phases which renders his pamphlet both authoritative and reliable.

I hope the pamphlet will have a wide circulation in all the large industrial centres, because I feel convinced that the majority of the rank and file of the wage-earners do not and cannot know what it is that our Bolsheviks are striving for. They have not the faintest idea in what direction some of them are being led. The Bolsheviks in certain industrial centres want to impose their own authority on the rank and file of the workers, using catch-words for that purpose. If they succeed in this direction they will set to work to undermine the trade union movement of this country, and upset, instead of making use of, the means we at present possess for improving our economic conditions.

Our minds go back to the Leeds "Convention," held in June, 1917. The delegates at that Conference declared that they were in favour of Workmen's and Soldiers' Councils being formed in all the large industrial centres of the country. Nothing whatever came of it. But the W.S.C.s then controlling the revolutionary undercurrent in Russia were totally different from the Bolshevik tyranny of to-day, and many of the delegates who formed the W.S.C.s in various parts of Russia after the Revolution have been imprisoned or shot because they opposed the domination of Lenin and Trotzky.

Last Tuesday I saw two friends whom I met in Petrograd in April, 1917, and both of them absolutely confirm the statements made in the Press about the hundreds of men and women who have been shot without any trial or confirmation of the charges brought against them.

An article which appears in the "Nineteenth Century" of January, written by Mr. Pierson, who was imprisoned in the Fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul last October, after being arrested at the British Embassy in Petrograd at the same time that Captain Cromie was shot, also confirms the brutalities that are taking place constantly in Petrograd and other parts of Russia.

A letter in the "Daily Express," written by Colonel John Ward, M.P., shows the terrible hell which Bolshevism is making, and the methods that are being pursued by the followers of Lenin and Trotzky. If the Soldiers' and Workmen's Councils had done their duty in the latter part of April, 1917, after Lenin made his two hours' speech in the Duma on April 17, they would have sent him back whence he came, because it is a well-known fact that he was allowed to pass through Germany with thirty other companions in a first-class saloon. I am quite convinced that it was not the Russian people who were paying his expenses during the time he was carrying on his pernicious propaganda work in various parts of Russia. The downfall of the Soldiers' and Workmen's Councils has been the consequence of their giving Lenin and his thirty companions full freedom to spread their anarchical creed and the wiping out of duly elected Assemblies.

The leading men of the Bolshevik movement in this country are out for the overthrow of things as they are by physical force as soon as they feel confident that they have a good number of the rank and file of the wage-earners behind them. I want to warn the wage-earners—men and women of my own class—against being associated with such people, because I know that their tactics cannot remedy the economic and industrial injustices under which the industrial workers are suffering. They

can be rectified by Social-Democratic education, scientific organisation in the trade union movement, and by using political powers to that end.

The methods adopted by the unauthorised shop stewards movement in the different parts of the country must be rigorously suppressed, and properly appointed shop stewards and works committees in all factories and workshops must be elected instead. By that method industrial and economic improvements can be brought about with the greatest benefit and the least harm to all.

The pamphlet gives a very clear statement about what is taking place in connection with the Bolshevik movement. That is the reason why I trust that it will have a wide circulation in all the large industrial centres of the country.

WILL THORNE.

February 13, 1919.

"BOLSHEVISM":

A Curse and a Danger to the Workers

Russia has given most countries of the world a new word. "Bolshevism" is to-day known universally, though its meaning is not by any means so universal. In Russia it has a very definite and often striking meaning, as many anti-Bolsheviks have known and are learning to their cost. Elsewhere it has a wider, if looser, significance, and is frequently employed to express or describe a number of things to which one objects. Our own Press, for instance, flings "Bolshevik" and "Bolshevism" at everybody and everything that it denounces, or against whom and which it seeks to raise prejudice. In this respect it has often overreached itself, for it is causing some to accept the Russian Bolsheviks at their own estimation, because they know that many of the things styled "Bolshevist" are not as bad as they are made out to be.

In Russia "Bolshevik" means majority, and "Menshevik" minority. Their real significance was purely an internal one for the Russian Social-Democratic Party. It is important to make this point clear, for now and again we come across British supporters of and sympathisers with the Russian Bolsheviks who take the name as a proof that the Government of Lenin and Trotzky actually represents the majority of the Russian people! Nothing is more contrary to the fact. The Bolshevik "coup de rue" of November, 1917, was as complete a usurpation of power as that of Louis Napoleon in 1851. True it was a usurpation by professed Socialists, supposedly in the interests of the Russian working class, but it was no less a usurpation and an attack on democracy which only success in the interests of the Russian working class could possibly justify. The forcible dissolution of the Constituent Assembly by the Bolsheviks two months afterwards, because the elections did not go in their favour, compelled them to take the road to complete domination, and they are now unable to retrace their steps, even if, as is reported, the more honest of them wish to do so.

Bolsheviks, Mensheviks, and Social Revolutionaries.

The terms "Bolshevik" and "Menshevik" (majority and minority) arose from the division in the Russian Social-Democracy which had shown itself at the Congress held in London in 1903. The difference is generally assumed to be one of tactics—of a readiness to co-operate with other parties for certain definite objects under certain special conditions ("Menshevik"), or of complete antagonism and opposition to all other parties every time and all the time ("Bolshevik"). But the difference lies deeper than that. "Bolshevism" is, in effect, the Russian form of "impossibilism." From this the thorough-going Social-Democrats of all countries have to suffer at times. By divorcing the application of Socialist principles and measures from the actual life of the day, and arguing and discussing "in vacuo," impossibilism drives many, who see the utter sterility of its results, into the opposite direction, that of opportunism for the moment without much thought for the future.

Until their "coup de rue" of November, 1917, the Russian Bolsheviks regarded themselves as the extreme Left of the Russian Social-Democratic Party. But latterly they have dropped the name Social-Democrat—so much the better for Social-Democracy—and have adopted that of the "Russian Communist Party"—so much the worse for Communism, for towards Communism the Social-Democratic Commonwealths of the future are bound to tend. "Bolshevism" to-day, where it is honest, is in the main a revival of the Anarchism of Bakunine, together with a policy of armed insurrection, and a seizure of political power which shall install the "dictatorship of the proletariat." That is the dividing line between the Bolsheviks and their Social-Democratic opponents, the Mensheviks, and their far more numerous and powerful antagonists, the Social Revolutionaries, who obtained an overwhelming majority in the Constituent Assembly which the Bolsheviks dissolved by force. The

Social Revolutionaries seek the emancipation of the peasants and workers by democratic means—the only safe and sure way—though they were quite ready to use force for the overthrow of Tsardom, happily effected in March, 1917. Unhappily, though, Bolshevik terrorism, with its complete inability to carry out its promises of "peace and bread" for the Russian people, and certain European financial interests are together rehabilitating reaction in Russia, and the people and the peasants may be driven to put up with some new autocratic régime in the hope that it may shield them from the present terrorism and secure them something to eat.

Bolshevist Intolerance.

Innumerable instances could be given of the bitter intolerance of the honest Bolshevik fanatics towards all sections of the International Socialist movement with which they have not agreed. Paul Axelrod, one of the founders of Russian Social-Democracy, in a pamphlet published at Zürich in 1915, entitled "The Crisis and the Duties of International Social-Democracy," reproaches Lenin with seeking to carry into the internal struggles of the Socialist Parties in Europe "specifically Russian methods" which aim directly at creating troubles and divisions, and branding without any distinction "nearly all the known and respected bodies of International Social-Democracy as traitors and deserters stranded in the bourgeois camp, treating these comrades, whose international conscience and sentiments are above all suspicion, as National Liberals, chauvinists, philistines, traitors, etc." Is this the way in which to raise the enthusiasm of the workers for the cause of Socialism? Is this the manner in which the spirit of self-sacrifice can be roused in the masses? It savours far too much of the old implacable bitterness of the Terrorists—reasonable and natural enough in their secret conspiracies, where a fellow-conspirator might be a police agent—but utterly out of place and mischievous when introduced into open propaganda and organisation.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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