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PARLOR BOLSHEVISM

By Theodore Roosevelt

HEADING BY TONY SARG

THE most powerful indictment of the corrupt and inefficient tyranny of the Romanoffs, or rather of the Russian autocracy, is that it produced Bolshevism. Dreadful though it is that despotism should ruin men's bodies, it is worse that it should ruin men's souls. Vast physical distress was caused by the centuries of despotism which Russia owed to the fact that six hundred years ago she lacked military ability to repel the Mongol warriors. But this is outweighed by the dreadful qualities of soul which the despotism produced in those who suffered under it.

We in America have a direct interest in this evil phenomenon. From the tyranny in Russia great numbers of Russians fled hither. Many of these—Alary Antin is a type—were eminently fit to live in a land which, with all its faults, is a land of freedom and of opportunity; and these gave much to the land which gave them so much. But many have been merely sources of poisonous corruption to the nation which gave them an asylum. Many of the Bolshevist exiles to this land returned to Russia when the revolution broke out, and most of these were filled with venom for this country. The prime cause lay not in our shortcomings—many though these are—but in their own corroded souls. This moral corrosion made them preach and practise the gospel of hatred and malice, not only toward all men of wealth whether they did good or evil, but toward all honest, hardworking, decent-living men and women who were not consumed by mean envy of others.

THESE Russian exiles were not asked to come here. They came here so as to be free from persecution and to better themselves. They owe this country everything. But the only emotions aroused in the Bolshevist type are mean hatred, mean desire to slander, and a self pity, both mean and morbid. The moral and mental attitude it introduces into this country is much more permanently mischievous than the bubonic plague, and against it we should erect a far more rigorous quarantine. The oppressed of other lands who have developed this kind of character should be kept out of this land at all hazards; and our immigration laws should promptly be changed accordingly. There are plenty of sordid and arrogant capitalists in this land; but their most harmful and unlovely traits are no worse and no more dangerous than those of this particular type of professional proletarian. In its full development it produces the Trozky's who have brought Russia to the brink of the abyss, and the Hillquits and Victor Bergers and Eastmans who would lead our people into a complete ruin of which one item would be subjection to the German autocracy. The most sordid capitalists and reactionaries can do no more harm to this country than these men, if given power, would do. The worst bourgeois

of politics and business stand no lower than these leaders of the American Bolshevists, of the I. W. W., the Germanized socialists, the anarchists, and all the squalid crew who preach the gospel of envy and hatred, who preach a class war which, when preaching is translated into action, expresses itself through the bomb and the torch.

These men are encouraged, and our own moral fibre is weakened, by the parlor or pink-tea bolshevism dear to the hearts of so many of our people who like to think of themselves as intellectuals, and who are, perhaps, particularly apt to find expression for their views in the New Republic. Most certainly, hard indifference to the conditions and opportunities of the immigrant is a hideous wrong; but is not bettered by a dilettante sentimentalism on behalf of wrong. We must never again view the immigrant merely as a labor unit. We must think of him only as a future citizen, whose children are to share with our children the heritage of this land. We must do for him everything that is right; and we must tolerate from him nothing that is wrong.

I HAVE spoken of immigrants of Bolshevist type. As a contrast I give the story of two Americans of the best American type. Otto Rafael was born on the East Side of New York, of parents who came from Russia. While I was Police Commissioner my attention was attracted to him by his saving a woman and a couple of children at a fire; I found him at the Bovey branch of the Y. M. C. A., although he is himself a Jew. He came on the police force. He did not spend his time in the indulgence of hate and envy toward those who were better off. He did his work as a policeman up to the hilt, and he used his salary chiefly to help out his family. He brought over one or two kinsfolk from Russia; he educated a sister; he enabled a brother to study for and become a doctor. He is now a lieutenant of police. At the same time that he entered the force an ex-man-of-war's man, who had served his time in the United States Navy, also entered the force. His name was Edward Burke; he is another American of the best type. His parents were born in Ireland. When the Spanish War came he got a holiday for six months, re-entered the navy, and served as captain of a gun. He is a hard man physically; I doubt if he can be hurt by anything that hasn't an edge to it. He is now a captain of police.

Burke and Rafael were appointed on their merits; I wanted to get the best possible men for the force, and they owed me gratitude for putting them there only to the extent that I owed them gratitude for being the kind of men I wanted. In other words, they owed me nothing. But they have chosen to remain very staunch friends, in fair weather and foul weather. When we

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entered the great war, both went into training to get in the division I had asked permission to raise; each fitting himself for special work—Burke handling machine guns, while Rafael's particular line I for the moment forget. Both would have held commissions under me if I had been allowed to raise troops.

These two men represent Americanism as opposed to Bolshevism. They did not wallow in the emotional mud bath, which consists of one part morbid self-pity and three parts envy, hatred and malice toward others—a mixture equally maudlin and sinister. They didn't pity themselves at all. They didn't hate others. They merely resolved to do as well as others. And they did so. They were men.

I do not mean that these two men can be taken as typical of the whole mass. They were exceptions. They had power of initiative and of leadership. It is our duty to help make conditions such that life will be fairer and easier for all, and the highways of opportunity kept more open than hitherto. But our aim can be reached by encouraging the essentially American activities and attitude shown by these two men, and not by practising parlor bolshevism ourselves or encouraging applied and murderous bolshevism among immigrants.

THE Bolsheviks have no lesson to teach America except what to avoid. They have betrayed democracy in America, England and France. They have plunged Russia into ruin. They fatuously hoped by this betrayal of their allies to make peace with the German militaristic autocracy, and then to betray it in turn. But the Germans were just as false, cunning and treacherous, and a thousand times more able; and having made the Bolsheviks publish themselves to the world as traitors to liberty, they have now proceeded to trample them under foot. And the Bolsheviks showed willingness only to fight their fellow Russians; they were helpless before the German invaders.

Their chief energies have been devoted to what Lenine calls "internal war." They have announced, as reported in the press, that they intend to confiscate all the property of the "small shopkeepers, more or less well-to-do peasants and workers who have submitted to a bourgeois point of view"—that is, thrifty skilled mechanics. In other words their hostility is now concentrated on the analogues of American farmers, small shopkeepers,

carpenters, steel puddlers, engineers, trainmen, blacksmiths, clerks, deep sea fishermen and the like. They announced at one time (before they finally and definitely threw Russia under the German yoke), that these men and their wives were to be employed to dig trenches, presumably because they think they are unused to this form of labor; the announcement reading: "All members of the bourgeois class, the women as well as the men, must enter these battalions under surveillance of the Red Guard and in case of resistance must be shot." No more utter tyranny existed under the Romanoffs. They purpose to stamp out of existence all the men of leadership and of special value, all the men whose activities do most to prevent the commonwealth from sinking to that level of savagery on which the tongue, supple and either immoral or crack-brained anarchist leaders would land their deluded followers.

THE precise analogues of these Russian leaders preach similar doctrines and a similar class war here in the United States. They are permitted to do so because it is our wise principle not to interfere with free speech by prohibiting the preaching even of moral treason until the narrow limits of legal treason are reached; and our people as a whole regard them with good humored and rather ignorant indifference. But there should be no mistake as to the fact that the preaching of this kind of class war has nothing in common with ordinary political discussion or party differences. The attempt to translate it into serious action would mean real war—and in a healthy country like ours the lunatic fringe would not come off first best in such event. And in such event if the real bolsheviks were successful the parlor bolsheviks would be among the first to be destroyed—exactly as the Petit Trianon disciples of Rousseau were among the first to fall when the Red Terror swept France. And if (as would surely happen) the real bolsheviks were not successful, the parlor bolsheviks would owe their shivering safety to the applied and practical Americanism of men like Burke and Rafael.

It is the Burkes and Rafels, and the men of like quality in every section of our country, and in every walk of life, whatever their creed and whatever their ancestry, who stand for the real and practical Americanism; and it is in their hands that the future of this country lies.