

THE RUSSIAN PLAN
FOR THE
LEAGUE OF NATIONS

TEXT of the Russian Soviet Government's
Peace proposals sent by Tchicherine to
President Wilson

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THE SOVIET PEACE PROPOSAL TO PRESIDENT WILSON.

On October 24th, 1918, the following note was handed by Tchicherine, The Russian People's Commissary for Foreign Affairs, to the Norwegian Attaché in Moscow, Mr. Christiansen, for transmission to President Wilson :—

To the President of the United States, Mr. Woodrow Wilson.

Mr. President, in clause 6 of your message to the United State Congress of January, 1918, you expressed your profound sympathy with Russia, at that time negotiating single-handed with the power of German Imperialism. Your programme, you declared, demanded the evacuation of all Russian territory and such a settlement of all questions affecting Russia as will secure the best and freest co-operation of the other nations of the world in obtaining for her an unhampered and unembarrassed opportunity for the independent determination of her political development and national policy, and assure her a sincere welcome into the society of free nations under institutions of her own choosing; and, more than a welcome, assistance of every kind that she may need and may herself desire. You added that "the treatment accorded to her by her sister nations in the months to come will be the acid test of their good will and of their comprehension of her needs as distinguished from their own interests, and of their intelligent and unselfish sympathy.

The desperate struggle we were making against German imperialism at Brest-Litovsk apparently only intensified your sympathy for Soviet Russia, for to the Congress of Soviets which had ratified, under threat of a German advance, the Brest Treaty of force, you sent a message of greeting and an assurance that Soviet Russia might rely upon the assistance of America.

Since that time six months have elapsed and the Russian people has had time to experience in actual reality the worth of the friendly sentiments expressed by your Government and your Allies; to test their understanding of Russian needs, and the intelligence and unselfishness of their sympathy. The real attitude of your Government and your Allies was first revealed by the Czecho-Slovak conspiracy, organised on Russian territory, with the financial assistance of your French Allies and with the diplomatic help of your own and other Allied Governments, a conspiracy to which your Government is still lending every assistance.

For some time attempts were made to create a pretext for a war between the United States and Russia by the circulation of fables alleging that German war prisoners had seized the Siberian railway; but your own officers and after them Colonel Robins, head of your Red Cross Mission, were able to convince themselves that these stories were false from beginning to end. The Czecho-Slovak rising was organised on the pretext of protecting these unfortunate and deluded men from being betrayed into the hands of the Germans and Austrians, but you can learn from the open letter of Captain Sadoul, member of the French Military Mission, and from other sources, how utterly bereft of all foundation was this fabrication. The Czecho-Slovaks could have left Russia at the beginning of the year had the French Government supplied the necessary transports. For several months we have

waited in vain for your Allies to enable the Czecho-Slovaks to depart. Evidently the Allied Governments preferred that the Czecho-Slovaks should remain in Russia—and subsequently have disclosed the motive—than that they should go to France to fight on the French front. The true character of the Czecho-Slovak rising is best shown by the fact, that, having obtained control of the Siberian railway, the Czecho-Slovaks did not seize the opportunity for departing, but by order of the Entente Governments have remained here a bulwark of the Russian counter-revolution. Their counter-revolutionary rising, which rendered impossible the transport of bread and naphtha on the Volga, which cut off the workers and peasants of Russia from the corn and other supplies of Siberia and condemned them to starvation—this, in point of fact, is what the workers and peasants of Russia experienced at the hands of your Government and your Allies in spite of the promises you had given them at the beginning of the year. This experience was followed by the attack of Allied troops, including American troops, in the North of Russia, their invasion of Russian territory without cause or even a declaration of war, the seizure of Russian towns and villages, the shooting of Soviet officials, and all sorts of outrages and acts of violence against the peaceful Russian population.

You promised, Mr. President, to co-operate with Russia, to obtain for her an unhampered, and altogether unfettered unembarrassed opportunity for the independent determination of her political development and her national policy. But your co-operation has taken the form of attacks, first by the Czecho-Slovak troops, then by your own troops and those of your Allies in Archangel, Murmansk, and the Far East, who are trying forcibly to re-impose upon the Russian people the rule of the old oppressors and the exploiting classes, the domination of which was overthrown by the workers and peasants of Russia in November 1917. The revival of the Russian counter-revolution, which had then almost expired, attempts to restore by force its sanguinary dominion over the Russian people—this is what the latter had experienced instead of that co-operation for the unembarrassed expression of their will, which you promised in your declarations.

Also, Mr. President, you promised to assist the Russian people in their fight for independence. Actually this is what has occurred: whilst the Russian people were fighting on the Southern front against the counter-revolution, which had sold itself to German Imperialism and was threatening Russian independence; and whilst on the Western frontier they were obliged to bend all their energies to defend their territory from the Germans, the Russian people were also compelled to send their forces to the East to meet the Czecho-Slovaks who were bringing with them enslavement and oppression, and to the North to meet your own troops and those of your Allies who had invaded their territory and were organising counter-revolution.

The acid test of the relations between the United States and Russia did not yield quite the results which might have been expected from your message to Congress, Mr. President. But we have reason for being not entirely dissatisfied, even with these results, since the outrages of the counter-revolution in the East and the North have shown the workers and the peasants of Russia the real aims of the Russian counter-revolution and of its foreign supporters. An iron determination was thereby generated amongst the Russian labouring masses to defend the liberties and the gains of the revolution; to protect the land it has given to the peasants, and the factories it has given to the workers. The fall of Kazan, Simbirsk, Syzran, and Samara must have made clear to you also, Mr. President, in what manner your

particular promises made to us in January, 1918, had been actually fulfilled. The experiences to which we have been exposed have helped us in the creation of a firmly consolidated and disciplined Red Army which every day is growing in strength and is learning to defend revolution. The attitude which was actually adopted towards us by your Government and the Governments of your Allies was powerless to destroy us. On the contrary, we are now stronger than we were a few months ago, and your present proposal of International negotiations for a general peace finds us very much alive, and thoroughly strong, and able in the name of Russia to give our consent to joining the negotiations.

In your note to Germany you demand the evacuation of the occupied territories as a preliminary condition which must precede the Armistice to be set up during the Peace negotiations. We are ready, Mr. President, to conclude an armistice on these terms, and ask you to notify us when you and your Allies intend to withdraw your troops from Murmansk, Archangel and Siberia. You refuse to conclude an armistice with Germany unless her armies agree to refrain from outrages and pillaging, etc., when evacuating the occupied territories. We make bold to draw therefrom the inference that you and your Allies will order the Czecho-Slovaks to restore the portion of our gold reserve which they stole in Kazan, that you will forbid them during their compulsory retirement (for we shall further their speedy departure without waiting your orders) to continue, as heretofore, their predatory practices and outrages upon the workers and peasants. As to your other condition of peace, that the governments making it must express the will of their people, you well know that our Government entirely fulfils this demand. Our Government expresses the will of the Councils of Workers' Peasants' and Red Armies' Delegates, representing at least eighty per cent. of the Russian people. This, Mr. President, cannot be said of your Government. But we, in the name of humanity and peace, do not make it a condition of the general peace negotiations that all the peoples taking part in them should necessarily be represented by councils of peoples' commissioners, elected at congresses of Soviets of Workers', Peasants' and Soldiers' Delegates. We know that this Soviet form of Government will soon be the general form, and that the general peace, which will deliver the peoples from the threat of defeat and disaster, will free their hands in order to put an end to that social order and to those shibboleths which forced upon the human race this universal slaughter, and will inevitably lead the lacerated peoples to form Soviet Governments which will exactly reflect their will.

While agreeing to participate in the negotiations even with governments which do not as yet express the will of the people, we on our part should like to ascertain in detail from you, Mr. President, your conception of the League of Nations with which you propose to crown the work of peace. You demand the independence of Poland, Serbia, Belgium, and liberty for the peoples of Austria-Hungary. You probably mean to say that the popular masses everywhere must first take the determination of their fate into their own hands in order afterwards to associate in a free league of nations. But, strangely enough, we have not seen among your demands the liberation of either Ireland, Egypt, India or even the liberation of the Philippines, and we greatly desire that these peoples, through their freely elected representatives, should have an opportunity, jointly with us, to take part in the organisation of the League of Nations. Before commencing negotiations for the establishment of a League of Nations we also desire, Mr. President,

to ascertain what solution you propose for the numerous problems of an economic character which have an essential importance for the cause of future peace. You do not mention the question of war expenditure; that intolerable burden which must rest upon the shoulders of the popular masses unless the League of Nations will repudiate the debts to the capitalists of all countries. You know as well as we, Mr. President, that this war is the result of the policy of all capitalist states, that the governments of all countries were racing one another in piling up armaments, that the ruling cliques of all civilised countries took part in the policy of grab, and that, therefore, it would be exceedingly unjust if the popular masses, after having paid for this policy with millions of lives and with economic ruin, should, in addition, have to pay tribute to the actual authors whose policy has led to all this incalculable misery. We therefore propose, Mr. President, that the basis of the League of Nations should be the repudiation of all War loans.

As to the restoration of the countries devastated by the war, unhappy Belgium, Poland, and Serbia, we are of the opinion that it is only just for all the nations to help in this respect, and however poor and ruined Russia may seem, she is prepared to help these victims of the war by all the means at her disposal. She expects that American capitalism, which has not suffered from this war in the very least, but, on the contrary, has made out of it profits amounting to hundreds of millions, should also do its part to help those people according to its means.

But a League of Nations ought not only to wind up the present war, it should also render all future war impossible. You must be aware, Mr. President, that the capitalists of your country intend to continue their policy of grab and appropriation of surplus value in China and Siberia; and that, fearing the competition of Japanese capitalists, they are preparing a military force in order to overcome the resistance which may be offered to them by Japan. You, no doubt, are aware that similar plans are nursed by the ruling capitalist circles in other countries in respect to other territories and other races. Knowing this, you will agree with us that the factories, mines, and banks must not be left in the hands of private individuals. These gigantic instruments of production which are worked and created by the popular masses, must no longer be controlled by capitalists who export the products and surplus capital to foreign countries, and who provoke imperialist wars by their struggle for the booty thus obtainable.

We therefore propose, Mr. President, that the League of Nations should be based upon the expropriation of the capitalists of all countries. In your country, the banks and industry are concentrated in the hands of such a small group of capitalists that, according to your personal friend, Colonel Robins, the arrest of twenty heads of capitalist cliques and the transfer to the popular masses of the control which these men, characteristic of the capitalist methods, have concentrated in their hands, would destroy the principal source of new wars. If you should agree to this, Mr. President, if the sources of new wars should for ever be blocked up in this manner, there can be no doubt that all economic barriers could easily be removed, and that the peoples controlling the means of production which they operate would be vitally interested in a mutual exchange of the products they do not want for the things they need. This would result in the exchange of commodities between nations, each producing what it could best produce, and the League of Nations would be a league of mutual aid to the labouring masses. It would then be easy to reduce the armed forces to the minimum necessary for the maintenance of public safety in the interior.

We well know that selfish profiteering capitalists will endeavour to create an internal menace, just as at present the Russian landlords and capitalists are trying, with the assistance of the armed forces of America, England, and France, to take the factories from the workers and the land from the peasants. But if the American workers, carried away by your idea of a League of Nations, will beat down the resistance of American capitalists, as we have beaten down the resistance of Russian capitalists, neither the German nor any other capitalists would continue to be a serious menace to the victorious working class. Then it would be sufficient if each member of the community, while working six hours in the factory, should for two hours a day, during a period of a few months, train to use arms, and the whole people would know how to cope with internal danger.

Thus, Mr. President, although we already know, by experience, the value of your promises, we nevertheless have taken our stand on the basis of your proposals for international peace and a League of Nations. We have tried to develop your proposals in order that they may not yield results as much opposed to your promises as those which have followed your pledge to help Russia. We have tried to formulate our proposals concerning a League of Nations with precision in order to prevent the League of Nations from becoming a League of Capitalists against the nations. Should you agree with us, we have no objection to the "open discussion of the peace terms" demanded by the first point of your peace programme. We shall easily come to an agreement as to details if you accept the basis of our proposals.

But there is also another possibility: We have to deal with President Wilson of the Archangel attack and the Siberian invasion. We also have to deal with the President Wilson of the League of Nations' peace programme. Is not the real President Wilson, who, in point of fact, is guiding the policy of the American capitalist Government, actually the former of the two? Is he not the American Government, the Government of the American joint-stock companies, the industrial commercial railway trusts and banks—in short, the Government of the American capitalists? If so, is it not possible that the proposal to establish a League of Nations, which emanates from this same American capitalist Government, will actually bind the peoples by new chains, and that an international trust will be formed for the exploitation of the working classes and the oppression of the weaker peoples? In that case, Mr. President, you will be unable to reply to our questions and we shall say to the working classes of all countries: "Beware! Millions of your brothers, flung at each other's throats by the capitalists of all countries, are still perishing on the battlefield; whilst the leaders of capitalism are trying to combine, in order to suppress by their united force the workers who remain alive when they call to account the authors of the war!"

Nevertheless, Mr. President, we have no wish to fight the American nation, even though your Government has not yet been replaced by a Council of People's Commissioners, and your place is not yet taken by Eugene Debs whom you are still keeping in prison. We have no wish to fight with England, even though the Cabinet of Mr. Lloyd George has not yet been replaced by a Council of People's Commissioners with Maclean at its head. We have no wish to fight with France, even though the capitalist Government of Clemenceau has not yet been replaced by a Labour Government led by Merheim. We have made peace with the imperialist Government of Germany headed by the Emperor Wilhelm, whom you, Mr. President, do not regard more favourably than we, the revolutionary Government of workers and peasants, regard you. Therefore, in spite of all, Mr. President, we propose that you should examine jointly with your Allies the following ques-

tions and answer them in a precise and businesslike manner. Will the Governments of America, England, and France cease demanding the blood of the Russian people and the lives of Russian citizens if the Russian people agree in return to pay them a ransom, as a man pays ransom to the assailant by whom he is suddenly attacked? If so, what tribute will the Governments of America, England, and France demand from the Russian people? Do they demand concessions, on certain terms, of mines, goldfields, and so on, or territories, some part of Siberia or the Caucasus, or the Murman Coast?

We expect, Mr. President, that you will define precisely the demands which you and your Allies intend to put forward, and also to state whether the alliance between your Government and the Governments of the Entente Powers is a sort of a Joint-Stock Company formed to draw dividends from Russia, or whether your Government and the Governments of the Entente Powers are each making separate claims, and, if so, what those claims are?

In particular, we wish to know what are the demands of your French Allies in respect of the milliards of roubles which the Paris bankers lent to the Czarist Government, the oppressor of Russia, the enemy of its own people. The Russian people, exhausted by war, and unable as yet to enjoy all the benefits of the popular Soviet régime, unable as yet to recuperate its economic strength, is not in a position to pay to the bankers of France the full tribute for the milliards expended by the Czarist Government to crush the people. You and your Allies are aware of this; you know that Russia could not at present repay those milliards even though you and your Allies should succeed in enslaving and in covering with blood the entire territory of Russia—which our heroic revolutionary Red Army will never allow.

Do your French Allies demand the payment of a portion of this tribute by instalments, and, if so, what portion? Do they foresee that their claims will induce the other creditors of the despicable Czarist Government which has been overthrown by the Russian people to bring forward their claims?

We cannot for a moment suppose that your Government and the Governments of your Allies have not a ready answer to these questions at a time when your and their troops are attempting to advance on our territory with the obvious intention of seizing and enslaving our country. The Russian people, as represented by the people's Red Army, is keeping guard over its territory and is gallantly resisting your invasion and the attack of your Allies. But your Government and those of the Entente Powers must undoubtedly have ready drawn up the plans for which you are shedding the blood of your soldiers.

We expect that you will disclose to us your demands with completeness and definition. Should our expectation be disappointed, should you fail to answer our precise and definite questions, we shall draw the only conclusion, that we are justified in assuming that your Government and the Governments of your Allies desire to exact from the Russian people a tribute in money, in the natural resources of their country, and also in actual territory. We shall tell this to the Russian people and to the labouring masses of other countries, and the absence of a reply from you will be for us a tacit admission of this charge. The Russian people will understand that the demands of your Government and the Governments of your Allies are so large and harsh that you do not even care to communicate them to the Russian Government.

(Signed) TCHICHERINE,

People's Commissary for Foreign Affairs.