

## THE ROMANOFF SCYLLA AND THE BOLSHEVIST CHARYBDIS

AN ARTICLE PUBLISHED IN THE METROPOLITAN  
MAGAZINE IN DECEMBER, 1918

FROM the days when civilized man first began to strive for self-government and democracy success in this effort has depended primarily upon the ability to steer clear of extremes. For almost its entire length the course lies between Scylla and Charybdis; and the heated extremists who insist upon avoiding only one gulf of destruction invariably land in the other—and then take refuge in the meager consolation afforded by denouncing as “inconsistent” the pilot who strives to avoid both. Order without liberty and liberty

without order are equally destructive; special privilege for the few and special privilege for the many are alike profoundly anti-social; the fact that unlimited individualism is ruinous in no way alters the fact that absolute state ownership and regimentation spells ruin of a different kind. All of this ought to be trite to reasonably intelligent people—even if they are professional intellectuals—but in practice an endless insistence on these simple fundamental truths is endlessly necessary.

Before our eyes the unfortunate Russian nation furnishes an example on a gigantic scale of what to avoid in oscillating between extremes. The autocratic and bureaucratic despotism of the Romanoffs combined extreme tyranny with extreme inefficiency; and the Bolsheviks have turned the Revolution into a veritable Witches' Sabbath of anarchy, plunder, murder, utterly faithless treachery and inefficiency carried to the verge of complete disintegration. Each side sought salvation by formulas which were condemned alike by common sense and common morality; and even these formulas were by their actions belied.

I do not say these things from any desire to speak ill of the Russian people. I am far too conscious of our own smug shortcoming during the world war to wish to comment harshly on a great people which has suffered terribly and which battled bravely for the three years during which we as a nation earned the curse of Meroz by the complacent and greedy selfishness with which we refused to come to the help of the Lord against the mighty—while our leaders with unctuous hypocrisy justified our course by de-

liberate falsehood and by a sham sentimentality which under the circumstances was nauseous. Our astute profiting by the valor of others saved us from paying the terrible penalty which Russia has paid; but from the standpoint of national and international morality our offense was well nigh as rank as Russia's. Since the Bolsheviks rose to power Russia has betrayed her own honor, and the cause of world democracy, and the liberties of well-behaved minorities within her own borders, and the right to liberty and self-government of small well behaved nations everywhere. But for the two years after the *Lusitania* was sunk, we continued to fawn on the blood-stained murderers of our people, we were false to ourselves and we were false to the cause of right and of liberty and democracy throughout the world. Had we done our duty when the *Lusitania* was sunk, instead of following the advice of the apostles of greedy and peaceable infamy, the world war with its dreadful slaughter would long ago have been over. Incidentally Russia would have been saved from the abyss into which she has fallen, for in her inevitable revolution the Bolsheviks would not have had the German support which has enabled them to wrench loose the very foundations of their country. No wonder poor Kerensky during his brief and perilous moment of leadership exclaimed that it was America's turn to do the fighting and endure the loss, for the three years' effort had strained Russia to the snapping point.

Moreover, we can feel genuine sympathy with the immense mass of Russian peasants, who have never been given the chance to learn self-government or to discriminate between possibilities and

impossibilities, and who in their ignorance and poverty, their suffering and bewilderment, must not be too heavily blamed for behaving as, when all is said, a very considerable fraction of our own people were anxious to behave. And during the last year or eighteen months our own government has behaved toward Russia with such shortsightedness and infirmity of purpose, such failure to adopt either or any of the possible courses until it was too late to get more than a fraction of the possible benefit, that it behooves us to be very charitable in our estimate of the Russian people. We neither back the men like Raymond Robbins who desired us to give peaceful aid to the Soviet Governments and to attempt to save Russia by our economic strength; nor yet did we back the Czecho-Slovaks by putting a substantial army in Siberia early last spring. We were neither wise and generous friends, nor just and fearless foes. We never acted until after the best time for action had passed. We hit; but we hit softly.

It is absolutely imperative for the sake of this nation that we shall realize the lamentable calamities that have befallen Russia and shall condemn in sternest fashion the men in our own country who would invite such calamities for America. The reactionaries, the men whose only idea is to restore their power to the bourbons of wealth and politics, and obstinately to oppose all rational forward movements for the general betterment, would if they had their way bring to this country the ruin wrought by the régime of the Romanoffs in Russia. To withstand the sane movement for social and industrial justice is enormously to increase the likelihood that the movement will be

turned into insane and sinister channels. And to oscillate between the sheer brutal greed of the haves and the sheer brutal greed of the have-nots means to plumb the depths of degradation. The soldiers who in this war have battled at the front against autocracy will not submit to the enthronement of privilege at home. They believe in discipline and leadership, they believe in the superior reward going to leaders like General Pershing and Admiral Sims; but they believe that in time the difference in industrial reward between the good man at the top of the management class and the good man in the workingman's class ought roughly to correspond to the difference in reward between the General and the Sergeant-Major, the Admiral and the Warrant Officer.

We will not submit to privilege in the form of wealth. Just as little will we submit to the privilege of a mob. There are no worse enemies of America than the American Bolsheviks and the crew of politicians who pander to them. We ought therefore clearly to understand what the Bolsheviks attempted in Russia and what after a year of power they have done for, or rather to, Russia. They utterly repudiated the idea of a democracy where every man is guaranteed his rights and is limited in his power to do wrong. Their effort was to create a Marxian socialistic state, based on the class conscious purpose of the proletariat to destroy and rob every other class. They oppressed and plundered impartially all former oppressors and wrongdoers and all former champions of fair dealing and liberty. They attacked the erst-while corrupt bureaucrat or wealthy land-owner who had neglected all his

duties not a whit more venomously than they attacked the small shopkeeper or skilled mechanic or industrious farmer or thrifty workingman who, because he had saved money and began to live decently, they denounced as having adopted "bourgeois standards." They definitely sought to realize the stark formulas of Marxian socialism; and therefore they have made a genuine contribution for warning and prevention against destructive adventure of a similar character in our own land. The followers of Trotsky and Lenine, like the followers of Robespierre and Marat, have just one lesson to teach the American people: what to avoid.

In the peace treaty of last March the Russian Bolsheviks and the German autocracy joined against the free nations. Anarchy and despotism joined against liberty. The representatives of the privilege of a proletarian mob and the representatives of the privilege of a plutocratic oligarchy struck hands against the men who believe in no privilege. Germany suppressed Bolshevism and restored military order in the Russian provinces the Bolsheviks ceded to her, and cynically supported Bolshevism in the rest of Russia precisely because Bolshevism is a cancerous growth; Germany recognizes that anarchy destroys freedom; therefore Germany encourages anarchy in every land to which she cannot apply her own iron despotism; for she wishes to destroy every nation that she cannot enslave. The Bolshevik leaders — it matters not whether they were sinister visionaries, or the corrupted agents of Germany — played Germany's game in order to gain a respite during which they brought still further destruction to their own countrymen. They

preached socialism, and practiced anarchy — in their extreme forms the two always meet when the effort is made actually to apply them.

Surely this lesson will not be lost on the people of the United States, the keen, kindly, brave people, who are often slow to wake but who are far-sighted and resolute when once awake. We of the United States must set ourselves to the task of ordering our own household in the spirit of Abraham Lincoln. Therefore we must realize that the reactionaries among us are the worst foes of order, and the revolutionaries the worst foes of liberty; and unless we can preserve both order and liberty the republic is doomed. At the moment, the profiteers, and all men who make fortunes out of this war, represent the worst types of reactionary privilege; and on a level of evil with them stand all the various exponents of American Bolshevism. Prominent, although not always powerful, among the latter are the professional intellectuals, who vary from the soft-handed, noisily self-assertive frequenters of frowsy restaurants to the sissy socialists, the pink tea and parlor Bolsheviks who support what they regard as "advanced" papers, and aspire to notoriety as make-believe "reds." I call these persons "intellectuals" in deference to the terminology of European politics; for they ape the silly half-educated people, and the educated able people with a moral or mental twist, who in almost every European country have found notoriety and excitement in fomenting revolutionary movements which they were utterly powerless to direct or control. Unless the term intellectual is to be construed as excluding either character or common sense it can be applied to them only

in irony. In our own vernacular they have been styled the exponents of Highbrow Hearstism or Bolshevism. The sincere and well meaning among them come in the class of those described by Don Marquis in his account of "Hermione and her little group of serious thinkers." Those in this class usually furnish the funds with which their more astute brethren carry on the propaganda and earn a shifty livelihood. Worthy soft-headed persons of both sexes — including some who edit magazines or write for them — think it smart and uplifting to describe with sympathy the Russian exile who wishes to smash our government because the "bourgeoise" who love music can purchase reserved seats at a musical performance — I suppose they should be kept free for the proletariat to sit in ten at a time; or to eulogize the red flag leaders of a "picnic of socialist locals" whose "spiritually alive" faces inflamed with "explosive ideas, big emotions and winged visions" the particular member of Hermione's group of serious thinkers who chronicled them — and who evidently had not exercised the infinitesimal amount of thought necessary to realize just what these same explosive ideas of the red flag gentry were at that moment producing in Russia.

I am referring to two articles chosen almost at random in respectable magazines. They represent a fad; a fad which is chiefly foolish but which may become mischievous. The dilettante Reds who gratify their vanity by this fad, play into the hands of the genuine Reds, who are not dilettantes, and who resort to bomb throwing, arson, robbery and murder as a business and not as a fad. The leaders of the Germanized so-

cialists of this country are traitors to America and to mankind just exactly as are the Bolshevist leaders in Russia ; and some at least of the leaders of the Non-Partisan League stand on the same footing. The leaders of the I. W. W. are no more victims of social wrong, are no more protesters against social evil, than are so many professional gun men. There are plenty of honest, misled men among the rank and file of all the organizations ; and plenty of wrongs from which these men suffer ; but these men can be helped, and these wrongs remedied, only if we set our faces like flint against the evil leaders who would hurl our social organism into just such an abyss as that which has engulfed Russia.

So much for the false friends of liberty. We must equally abhor the false friends of order. Those who invoke order to prevent the righting of wrong are the ultimate friends of disorder. Our sternest effort should be exerted against the man of wealth and power ,who gets the wealth by harming others and uses the power without regard to the general welfare. In the times ahead we must avoid equally both hardness of heart and softness of head. We must substitute the full performance of duty in a brotherly spirit, both for the mean and arrogant greed of the haves and for the mean and envious greed of the have-nots. At present Germany is dangerous as a huge man eating beast is dangerous ; Russia is dangerous as an infected and plague stricken body is dangerous. We must guard against both. And within our own borders we must steer our great free republic as far from the Romanoff Scylla as from the Bolshevist Charybdis.