

LENIN'S "SEALED TRAIN"

Karl Radek Lifts Veil on Bolsheviki's Trip Across Germany After Revolution

The following account of the trip through Germany of the famous "sealed train" carrying Nikolai Lenin and a group of his Bolshevik fellow-travelers en route from Switzerland to Russia in the Spring of 1917 was written for a recent special number of *L'Humanité*, the leading French Communist paper, by Karl Radek, the Galician revolutionary publicist, generally classified as the foreign expert of the Soviet Government. Radek naturally makes light of the widely credited version of the trip, according to which the German Government eagerly facilitated the transportation of the Bolsheviki to Russia in the hope of wrecking the morale of the Russian Army and supplied Lenin and his lieutenants with huge quantities of German gold for Bolshevik propaganda purposes. The article is entitled, "How the Bolshevik Bacillus Was Discovered by the Germans and Transported to Russia by General Ludendorff."

By KARL RADEK.

THE development of the bacillus was written about many years ago. James Gilom, a true friend of Bakunin, and Laskin, who drew material from him, frequently related how the old Teuton Karl Marx brought the Bolshevik bacillus into this world. But, as Marx was a deceitful fellow and wished to conceal the German character of communism, he prepared it out of various constituent parts. He took the teachings of the English economists and of the classical writers, the historical experiences of the French Revolution, used the results of the idealistic work of the French Utopians, and melted them all together in the retort of German philosophy. You know that the boche is never original, but is very sly, and with devilish cunning always creates something extremely useful to "bochism" out of the various parts of foreign inventions.

What there was further in the Bolshevik bacillus produced by the boche Marx, and what happened to it during the course of sixty-seven years following its discovery, are also unknown. It lived peacefully in books and hurt nobody, and only when the war lasted too long and General Ludendorff didn't know how he was to get rid of it did he send the dangerous bacillus to Russia. Indeed, he did it under the pressure of the same dangerous animals.

As is well known, the revolution broke out in Petrograd in March, 1917. If you now read over the Temps, the Matin and The London Times of those days, you will see that this revolution was not regarded as particularly dreadful. * * * The Russian Bolsheviki in Switzerland tried at any price to get to Russia to take part in the revolution. We knew very well that, despite the hypocritically joyous declaration of the Entente press, the ideas of the English and French Governments about the Russian revo-

lution and its triumph differed from ours, and, thanks to that, the trip through England and France looked utopian.

The opinion was shared by Martof, the house-broken revolutionist, who was the father of the idea of having the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Peasants' Delegates ask England and France to allow us to pass and then if this didn't succeed to turn to Germany. In this connection, Lenin, who is known by everybody to be a skeptic, didn't believe that permission would be obtained from either the Entente or Germany. He was all for the idea of crossing Germany illegally. He tried to get false Swedish passports for himself and Zinovief. We explained to him that neither he nor Zinovief could talk Swedish. Then in desperation he asked us to get two passports for dumb men. But as it appeared doubtful to us that we could find two dumb men in the Swedish party who resembled Lenin and Zinovief, we decided to see if Martof's propositions could be realized.

Martof telegraphed to Tcheldse, then President of the Petrograd Council of Workers' and Peasants' Delegates, while I, in the presence of Paul Levi, who was then in Switzerland, had a conversation with the correspondent of the Frankfurter Zeitung—Dr. Deingart, if I recollect aright—regarding the possibility of his asking Rombert, the German Ambassador, about the German Government's agreeing to allow the Russian political emigrés to cross Germany. When he informed us that Ambassador Rombert was ready to negotiate with us, we entrusted the task to Robert Grimm.

We gave him written instructions in which we demanded freedom of transit for all the emigrés who wished to go, without the exclusion of any one by the German Government. We demanded that only the committee elected by those who were going through have the right to check up the list of the travelers, and that the German Government make no attempt to get into touch with us during our trip. On our side, we proposed to do all that we could to improve the condition of—the German prisoners of war, and also to try to hasten the return of the sick and wounded men from Russia. Robert Grimm had a conversation with Rombert and informed us that, although Rombert was much surprised by our demands, he had reported to Berlin by wire. As we were then already a little doubtful about Grimm, we proposed that he take Fritz Platten with him in future interviews. Grimm advised against this on the ground that in the course of the coming negotiations with Rombert something of more importance might come up, and that Platten might be a good revolutionist, but he was a poor diplomat. This observation forced us to decline Grimm's further services. The subsequent negotiations were carried on

by Fritz Platten, as we were sure that this rough, upright comrade would play no diplomatic tricks.

After a little while Rombert informed us, in the name of the German Government, of its acceptance of our demands. And of course it was evident that the German Government believed that it could take a chance, on the supposition that after our arrival in Russia we would agitate for peace. It believed it could hold down the tendency toward peace in its own country itself. These speculations didn't bother us very much, for we knew that if the revolution in Russia assumed a proletarian character its influence would spread far beyond the Russian borders. And so everything was prepared for the trip.

Martof's group objected in principle to the journey. It still awaited an answer from Tcheldse in order to be able to insure itself against any kind of reproaches in the future. Martof never started a revolution without providing himself with a sworn statement that he could not have acted otherwise, so we were ready to travel. We knew that the trip through Germany would give rise to all sorts of reproaches against the Bolsheviki. Lenin even counted upon the possibility of a political prosecution, and all those going along had to sign a statement to the effect that they were aware of the possibility of such a danger.

There was no other way out. It was clear that neither England nor France would allow us to pass their borders. This supposition was verified. All Tcheldse's efforts along that line came to naught, and two weeks behind us Martof's group also came through Germany.

We had to collect the documents concerning the journey and leave copies of them abroad. Loritt of France, Paul Levi of Germany, Bronsky of Poland and Platten of Switzerland signed the report on the conditions under which we were to make the trip. When our work in Berne was finished we went to Zurich, where we received the last greetings of our friends, the last curses of the patriots, and set out for Germany.

It was already evening when our train entered the frontier station. We were forty men strong, with children and baggage. The German frontier guard met us and conducted us to the Custom House. According to the conditions, neither our papers nor our baggage could be examined. It was only a matter of being counted, for which purpose the men and women gathered in the different corners of the room. Soon afterward we disappeared into the cars, where the organizing abilities of the Russian emigrés triumphed over everything. The train moved. We had two cars at our disposal. One compartment was occupied by the German officers accompanying us, with whom Fritz Platten, as the first diplomatic representative of the future Soviet Russia, acted as liaison officer.

Early in the morning Platten came with the news that Jansen was on the train and wanted to greet us on German soil in the name of the Central Commission of the German Trade Unions. It was plain that this was a feeler being put out by that sly fox, Legien, and that Parvus, too, was not entirely disinterested in the matter, as Jansen was not only Legien's diplomatic agent, but also the principal procurer for Parvus in all his activities. We declined to meet him. Platten got the newspapers for us from Jansen and took him to the

officers' compartment, where he found refuge.

In Frankfort-on-the-Main the German soldiers stationed there learned that there were Russian revolutionaries on the train. They broke through the cordon of spies and forced their way into the cars, each with two glasses of beer in his hands. The beer was very poor. We could already see that it was all over with German prosperity. The soldiers were honest workingmen and only asked us when peace would arrive. In the course of the talk we learned that most of them belonged to the Scheidemann party. In Berlin our cars were surrounded by the spies on guard until the train was in motion again.

At last we were on the ship. It was a splendid day, with a fresh sea breeze. Lenin ran around on deck and kept on asking if his nose hadn't got blue, which, according to the sailors' observations, signifies the imminence of an internal storm. But everything came through all right. We received a radio message informing us that Ganyetski and the secretary of the Swedish party, Comrade Storm, were waiting for us in the Swedish port. And so it turned out. But a still greater pleasure awaited us. The Swedish comrades ordered a good supper, which was annihilated by forty "bacilli" with incredible speed. The restaurant employes took us for a band of barbarians. Then we went to the station, and the next morning we were in Stockholm.

In the Hotel Regina, where we spent nearly a whole day, there was organized a meeting at which we told the Swedish comrades about our traveling conditions and, besides, that after our arrival in Stockholm we had received news to the effect that Parvus, in the name of the German Social Democrat Party, wanted to open official negotiations. We refused. Among the important events of the day it is to be noted that, after considerable strife we succeeded in persuading Lenin to buy a pair of trousers and a pair of shoes for himself. When I arrived in Petrograd, in November, 1917, after the conquest of power by the Bolsheviki, I saw these same Stockholm trousers on Lenin, already respectably tattered.

At that time Vorovsky, the present Soviet envoy in Rome, and Ganyetski, an envoy in Riga, were living in Stockholm. I, as an Austrian subject, could not enter Russia, so I was left behind with them as foreign representative. There we received 300 Swedish crowns, which was probably the huge sum that, in all the tales of the French patriots, figured as the German gold fund for the promotion of the Russian revolution. During the seven months we carried on international propaganda in Stockholm we didn't get a single kopek from Petrograd, nor did we send any there.

In the evening Lenin and his comrades left for Russia. The Swedish comrades accompanied him. As the train began to move some Russian patriot made a solemn address in which he urged Lenin not to do anything to injure Russia. But as the train was already under way Lenin didn't hear the end of the speech, so he organized the November revolution. It often happens in history that slight causes bring about great events.

This is the true story of the Bolsheviki's trip through Germany in the so-called sealed train, which in reality wasn't sealed at all. And if I even were to appear before the Entente court which is still waiting for Wilhelm II, couldn't say anything more.