

Democratic Russia

By Prof. W. W. SWANSON.

It can be conclusively shown that Great Britain, during the past decade, has done more to maintain the peace of the world than any other single Power or group of Powers. In a very real and vital sense British statesmen mean what they say when they assert that the present struggle is being carried on to its relentless end to obliterate militarism and all its ways. The Liberal leaders in the present administration find neither glory nor glory in war. To them it is merely a hideous fungus growth upon civilization that must be ruthlessly cut away. Premier Asquith, Mr. Lloyd-George and others, have made it clear that the object of the present war is not to destroy Germany or the German people, but to extirpate militarism and the military caste in the German Empire. Only so will it be possible to admit Germany once more to the family of nations that hold in their keeping what is most precious in the civilization of the world. There are not wanting signs, indeed, that the German people themselves will join in this work, and free themselves from the domination of the oligarchy of Prussian landowners that has menaced them and Europe for fifty years.

What of Russia.

This solution of the problem of militarism, however, by no means satisfies those who see Russia in the near future usurping Prussia's place as the foremost military Power on the Continent. It is pointed out that Russia, in many ways will prove a more formidable menace to the peace of the world than ever Germany; the bureaucrats and the forces of reaction are in control. It is argued that a victory for the Allies will mean a victory, most of all, for Russia; and that the autocracy will be hailed as the saviour of the nation. Once more the Czar will have become the "little father" of his people; and democratic government will have been put off for at least another generation.

That there is much truth in this contention cannot be gainsaid. It cannot be denied that, in a very vital sense, autocracy is on trial to-day in Russia. If it be established that the bureaucracy has shown capacity, foresight and determination in carrying on this struggle the more intelligent classes in Russia might well hesitate before consenting to throw their established institutions on the scrap-heap. This by no means indicates, however, that the popular will will no longer make itself felt in directing the life of the nation; but merely that Russia will go slow in discarding the framework of her present governmental system. We shall discuss this point in greater detail in a moment.

Territorial Expansion.

That Russia will emerge a great and mighty Power from the present struggle cannot be doubted. Russia's rise, indeed, has been one of the most spectacular events in modern history. The original Russian domain centred around Moscow, was comparatively small in extent, and contained a population of only three million souls. Gradually the peasants, who depended almost entirely upon agriculture for a livelihood, were compelled to go further afield as the near-lying lands became exhausted, and so spread to the north and to the south. The extent of the migration in each direction was conditioned, for centuries, by the flora and fauna encountered. To the north the country was wooded and well-watered, although the soil was comparatively poor. In the south, along the shores of the Black and the Caspian Seas, stretched a vast belt of marvelously fertile black land — the so-called steppes — which, although it has been tilled for centuries, remains wonderfully productive to-day. The nature of the soil, however, was not the only factor that these early settlers had to consider; the aboriginal inhabitants counted for as much. In the north the peaceful Finns offered no barrier to Russian colonization; but in the steppes wild and savage nomadic tribes, Mahometans in religion and Tartars in racial extraction, ravaged the country and swept through Russian settlements with fire and sword. It was not until the fifteenth century that Russia was able to free her southern territories from Mongol domination; and then just in time to meet a new danger from the West.

The country to the West was poor, and offered little scope or inducement for agricultural settlement. It was, moreover, strongly held by nations much more advanced in the arts of war and peace

than the Russians — namely, the Poles, the Swedes and the Livonian Order on the east shore of the Baltic Sea. Through the military aggression of the Poles, who sought to dominate and crush Russia, the Czar was called upon to defend his people and his empire. The Polish nation at first triumphed; and a son of its king became for a brief period Czar of Russia. This was only to be expected, for the Poles were the first military nation in Europe, and Russia was not yet welded into a homogeneous and compact country. By incredible efforts and sacrifices, all of Russia's western enemies were defeated one after the other; the great part of Poland was absorbed; the Livonian Order dispersed and the eastern shore of the Baltic secured; and finally, in 1809, Sweden yielded up Finland.

Russia in the Balkans.

In this rapid, bird's-eye view of Russian expansion a word or two may be said concerning Russia's position in the Balkans and the Far East. In A.D. 988 Vladimir, Grand Prince of Kiev, accepted Christianity and his followers gradually were converted to the Christian faith also. In this way Russia became ecclesiastically part of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, and the people learned to look upon Tsargrad — the city of the Czar, as the seat of the Byzantine Empire was then called — with peculiar veneration. When the Turks, therefore, captured Constantinople in the fifteenth century and turned the church of St. Sophia into a mosque the feelings of every orthodox and loyal Russian were outraged. From that time forth the Czar and his people have never ceased to look forward to the day when the infidel would be driven from the holy city, and Constantinople again become the seat of a Christian empire.

Religious and Racial Affinity.

To a certain extent the religious factor explains Russian policy in the Balkans, but it does not account for all. Racial affinity with the Serbs and Bulgars counts for much, and makes clear why the Russian people are so deeply moved by Austrian intrigue and the attempt of that country to establish an hegemony over the Balkan States. More than that, the Black Sea can be little more than an inland lake until Russia shall have secured the right to the free navigation of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. This was definitely denied her at the Congress of Berlin in 1878, although Russia had won that right after a bloody contest with Turkey in 1877-78. As, however, united Europe barred her way to the Mediterranean she turned her attention, for the time being, to the Far East.

The Absorption of Manchuria.

In 1858 the dexterous diplomacy of Ignatiev induced China to cede to Russia the rich Primorsk provinces between the Amur river and the Pacific in return for protection against the French and English who had invaded China, captured Peking, and burned the summer palace. In like manner, before and after the Chino-Japanese war of 1895, Russia attempted to gain control of the rich province of Manchuria and its deep warm-water port at Vladivostok. Japan, at the close of her successful war with China in 1895, compelled that country to cede to her the isthmus of Liaotung, a southward prolongation of Manchuria, jutting out into the Yellow Sea, between the Chinese coast and Korea, and dominating the sea route to Peking. Russia, with the aid of France and Germany, forced Japan to withdraw from the peninsula. Germany seized Kiaochow while Russia forced the Chinese government to give her a lease of Port Arthur and Talienshan, situated near the southern point of the Liaotung peninsula, and a railway concession to unite these ports with her Trans-Siberian Railway. The Chinese government was too weak to refuse these demands; and thus the process of gradually absorbing Manchuria began. This whole grandiose scheme was wrecked, however, in the war with Japan in 1904-05. Russia was driven out of Port Arthur and Talienshan, was forced to abandon the Liaotung peninsula, and remained in Manchuria only on granting to Japan equal rights, both commercial and political, in that province.

Must We Clash With Russia?

The United Kingdom comes in direct contact with Russia in Persia, Afghanistan and China. Britain,

together with Japan, guaranteed in 1905 to maintain the principle of the "open door" in China, and maintain that country's integrity against all comers. The United States has pledged itself, also, to support that policy, although the Republic has entered into no formal agreement to do so. Russia, on the other hand, has been determined, sooner or later, to seize Manchuria and all of Northern China; and Germany was more than willing to share in the spoils. It would appear, however, that the Russian menace to China's integrity need no longer give cause for alarm. Japan has driven Germany — a possible Russian ally — from her eastern outpost at Kiaochow; and Russia for a generation at least to come will be busy in rehabilitating her economic equipment in western Europe. As any rate, she cannot be ready for many years to come to throw down the gauntlet to Japan. England has been long apprehensive concerning Russia's designs on India. It is not generally known that the Trans-Siberian has been linked up, by means of a branch line, with Afghanistan; and Russia troops, once placed at the end of this spur, would be within a day's march of Herat, the capital of Afghanistan. But the only feasible route to India is by way of her north-western frontier, and not over the mountains which would present insuperable obstacles to an invader. Now, the north-western frontier has been so fortified by British engineers that even the strongest military Power in Europe would think twice before attempting to cross it. Kitchener has made the invasion of India from the north a practical impossibility. The trench warfare of the present European struggle demonstrates that the only vulnerable section of India's northern frontier can be successfully defended.

The Persian problem has been fairly well settled by Sir Edward Grey and Russian diplomats. Russia has secured, without doubt, the larger sphere of influence in Persia, but Britain has obtained what is vital to her — a belt of country in the south that gives her control of the Persian Gulf, and hence of a strategic base on the highway to India. Russia, then, does not at present threaten any vital British interest in Persia. There remains, to be sure, the problem of Constantinople — a problem whose solution lies in the lap of the gods. But, whether Constantinople be internationalized or not, it may be affirmed that British statesmen no longer consider that, even in Russia's possession, this strategic centre will seriously menace the high-road to India.

The Power of the Russian Democracy.

The Russian Empire now consists of 8,648,000 square miles, or about one-seventh of the land-surface of the globe. The Russian population, also, has kept pace with the growth of the country. Since 1722, when the first census was taken, until the present time the increase has been from 14 to 170 millions. And that population, slowly but surely, is becoming permeated with the principles of democracy. It is a vital error to suppose that, because the central government is autocratic, the people are not liberty-loving. Russians have shown by their blood and their tears, their banishments and their exiles, that they prize liberty and know how to die for it. If, then, Russians will think less of conquest in the future, and more of education and material and political progress, they will prove no threat to Europe's liberty, but will rather stand as a bulwark before it.

What Russia needs most of all is internal economic development. She has all the territory she needs — more than she can properly exploit and develop for a generation, at least, to come. She will need English capital, aid and advice. And so it seems certain that material and spiritual ties will bind these great nations together and make them a mighty force for the advancement of civilization and the rights of humanity.

BRITISH NATIONAL MUNITIONS SERVICE.

We woke up slowly to it, but I am now perfectly satisfied with what we are doing. We have now 2,500 factories, employing 1½ million men and a quarter of a million women. We have adapted old plants and established new ones on modern lines. We are not only satisfying the requirements of our own army, but we are also supplying our allies, particularly Russia. One cannot have an idea of the tremendous work going on in Britain just now unless one can see it. — Lloyd George, in The Secolo (Milan.)

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