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RED RUSSIA

(By John Reid.—By Permission of Liberator.)

(Thousands of dollars have been offered for these stories of the greatest event in the world, by the greatest correspondent on the American Continent.

The Canadian Forward has been fortunate enough to get permission from the author to publish this story which is also appearing

in the "Liberator." Don't miss reading it.

Mr. John Reid is the Russian Consul for New York State, for the Russian People's Government.

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(Continued)

A VISIT TO THE ARMY.

(In his article last issue John Reid described the new democratic organizations which sprang up to take charge of the Russian army under the Revolution. In this article he tells of the workings of democracy in the rank and file.)

In the Iskosol automobile, painted war-gray, we slipped down the hill out of Venden, through its German-looking medieval streets, thronged with masses of soldiers, past a long train of bullock-carts coming back empty from the direction of the front. At the edge of the village a regiment was swinging up, headed by its band playing the Russian "Marseillaise," and a great flag all red, with gold letters, "Peace and Liberty". The soldiers were coming out of the bloody trenches. They had marched thirty miles through mud. To the great sweep of the revolutionary music they tramped stiffly, arms swinging with the peculiar motion of the Russian infantry heads thrown up and back, grey, gaunt faces strained and stern. A forest of tall bayonets swayed above them, and they choked the narrow street—a torrent of mud-colored humanity. The coats of several were in rags—some were walking in bare feet. The window in a house wall high-up swung open, and a yellow-haired girl leaned out, laughed and waved.

It rained, as it had rained steadily, monotonously, for days; as it would probably go on raining for weeks... The Jewish lieutenant who went with us was pouring out scraps, odds and ends of interesting information. He told how the Jews had always been forced to serve in the ranks, but that since the Revolution thousands had become officers... although many preferred to stay in the ranks because shoulder-straps are distrusted by the soldiers. Before the Revolution the soldiers only received 65 kopeks (now about thirteen cents), per month—but now they got seven and a half roubles (a dollar and a half), every thirty days; and out of that they often had to buy food... Then there was the question of decorations, the

various degrees of the Orders of St. Ann, St. Vladimir, and St. George, the last of which carry with them certain small money payments. Before the Revolution these crosses were bestowed by a council of superior officers, as emanating from the Emperor; now they were given by acclamation by an assembly of the soldiers. These were only slight details indicating the profound change that had taken place in all the relations of military life.

He also spoke of the retreat from Riga, adding to the sinister story the events he himself had witnessed. "In the rout," he said, "the army hadn't the least idea what to do. The staff completely lost its head, as it did at Tarnopol. For three days it disappeared, leaving only general orders to retreat, and scattered along the roads, each officer for himself. It was the Iskosol which decided to defend our main positions, and we set up headquarters here in Venden and organized the military resistance on our own responsibility. It was bad enough before," he went on, "but since Riga the soldiers refuse to obey any general staff orders unless counter-signed by us... But it works not badly."

Now we were humping along the wide, bleak Pskov chaussee, originally paved with cobbles, but pitted and torn by the passage of armies, and deep in mud. Straight and powerful it plunged directly southwest, to the lines—and beyond to Riga—over the rolling country. Peasants, mostly kerchiefed women who grinned cheerfully as we passed, were carelessly dumping stones and dirt on the broken placés. An endless succession of trucks and wagon-trains went by, cavalry with long lances and rifles slung cross-wise on their backs, squads of infantry straggling along, single soldiers. One drew a cow, on which he had hung his rifle and a sack of carrots. There were wounded men, with arms tied in bloody rags. Many were barefoot in the cold ooze. Almost all bore upon their uniforms somewhat a spot of red; and everyone seemed to have a newspaper in his pocket or his hand.

We turned south off the main highway for a few miles over a road built of tree-trunks laid side by side, corduroy, through deep pine forests to

the little village where the Stab Corps has its headquarters. In the datchia of some long-vanished landowner the officers of the staff welcomed us, but after glancing at our Socialist credentials, they cooled perceptibly, and did not even offer a glass of tea—which is about as near an insult as a Russian can get. However, the twenty-two year old captain who went with us soon began to talk with Russian expansiveness, telling many things he doubtless should not have told.

"Between ourselves," he said "we all think that there was treason in the fall of Riga. Of course we were terribly overweighted by the German heavy artillery and the army was torn by all sorts of bad feeling between men and officers. But even then... You remember at the Moscow Conference when General Kornilov said: "Must we lose Riga to awaken the country to a sense of peril?" Well, the retreat from Riga began at the same time as the Kornilov attempt.

"After the first withdrawal of the 186th Division beyond the Dvina, all the army received general orders to retreat—not to any particular point, but simply to retreat. Then the staff disappeared for days. There was a panic. The Iskosol was trying to stop the flight. On the Pskov chaussee just north of here I came upon disorganized fragments of the Seventh Division in disorder. An officer showed me the written orders from the staff—simply this—"Go north and turn to the left."

In the deep woods muddy soldiers were digging pits and building log huts half underground, covering the roofs with dirt and branches—for winter quarters. All through this back country soldiers swarmed. Each patch of forest was full of artillery-limbers and horses, squadrons of cavalry bivouacked under the trees, and in the sullen downpour thin curls of blue smoke mounted straight up into the cold, quiet air. Again we were speeding along the great Pskov road, through the rich, fertile country of the Estland barons—those powerful German landowners, the most reactionary in all Russia. Great estates extended on both sides of the road, solid miles of fields lately plowed or yellow-green with abandoned crops; forests, deep green pines or flaming birches; lakes, pools, rivers; and the ample farmhouse of rich peasants, or chateaux of the local lords. Occasionally soldiers would be working in the fields. The Association of Zemstovs had plowed and planted all the Baltic provinces so that this year's harvest would feed the army and leave a million poods over—now almost fallen into German hands.

Whole acres of cabbages were rotting yellow, untouched and fields of beets and carrots were washed out by the rain. The ostentatious country houses stood roofless, burnt; the peasant homesteads had their windows smashed, and trails of loot led in all directions. And over the silent

country waste and empty, only immense flocks of rooks whelled screaming in the rain, the throbbing matter of far-off battle sounded, and the only human life was the hysterical life of an army in battle.

Off to the right a quarter-mile across the plain, the village of Ziege-wald was being bombarded. Unseen, unheralded except by the muffled boom of cannons miles away, the shells came whining down out of the gray sky, and house after house heaved up and burst apart in splinters and black smoke. Our automobile turned in and entered the village. Only a block away some unseen thing roared suddenly and tore a building apart—the air was full of bricks. Down the street some peasants stood at the door of their hut, a bearded man and a woman with a baby in her arms, quietly watching. A few soldiers went nonchalantly across the fields, hands in pockets, more interested in us than the shelling. Almost into it we drove, and then turned to the left. The captain was laughing. Right behind us, where we had passed, a jagged pit opened in the road. Shrapnel began to burst.

Along a deserted road, only used at night—for it was in sight of the enemy—we crept beside a cedar hedge, while over our heads the hurtling shells went whistling, high up. Half a mile behind, over to the right, a Russian six-inch battery fired methodically at some unseen target, so far away that the explosions were barely audible. Through a farm we went, between a big house and a stone barn, both roofless and peopled with soldiers and field-kitchens; and along an open field to the wooded heights above the river. Ah, where lay the Russian first-line trenches.

Like grotesque, mud-colored monsters the Russian soldiers crawled from their bomb-proofs to look us over—gaunt, drab-faced creatures, dressed in outlandish combinations of odds and ends of military and civilian cloths, their feet wrapped in rags. Since we were with officers they were sullenly suspicious, and demanded papers. Through the trees we could see the opposite bluffs, where the Germans lay hidden—but it was still raining steadily, drearily and there seemed to be a tacit agreement.

A bearded soldier came up, wearing the red arm-band of the soldiers' committee.

"Any news from Petrograd?" he asked the captain, without saluting. All the others crowded around. The captain answered that he himself had not seen the papers. "Huh," grunted the other, and turned slowly to us. "If these are Americans," he went on, "ask them why their country refused to endorse the Russian peace terms. Tell them that this is prolonging the war; that thousands of Russian men are dying because of it."

Half a mile further along we stood in front of the company commander's dug-out while he spoke to the captain

(Continued on page four)