

## The Invitation to Russia

THE motives which induced the peace conference to invite representatives of all the Russian Governments, real or pretended, to meet at Princes' Islands and talk things over were undoubtedly various. Whatever they were, however, the action itself is in the highest degree praiseworthy, and ought to have the hearty approval of everybody everywhere who at heart really cares for Russia and its people and desires that justice shall be done. If, as press reports affirm, the action was due primarily to President Wilson, it is a striking testimony to the weight of his influence and a distinct credit to his sense of fairness and right. However unsatisfactory his attitude with regard to Russia may have been in the past, his course in this instance calls only for commendation. It is entirely possible, too, that the representatives of the other Powers may have seen in the suggestion an opportunity to extricate their Governments from the dangerous and impossible positions which some of them, particularly France, have assumed toward the Russian imbroglio. If so, they may in due time be grateful for the service which Mr. Wilson has done them.

One result of the decision has already been highly satisfactory. A considerable number of prominent personages and their newspaper allies, who have been playing their game more or less under cover, have been forced to come out into the open and show their hands. The emigrant Russian princes and princesses, ex-Ambassadors of the Czar and Kerensky, and secret agents, who, safely in exile in Europe or America and abundantly supplied with money from mysterious sources, have been filling the press of both continents with denunciations of the Soviet Government or the Bolsheviki, or acclaiming Kolchak and his followers as the only government worth considering in Russia, or clamoring for an international army (to be paid for chiefly through American loans) large enough to occupy Russia from end to end, and who in the meantime have been carrying on an impudent and insidious propaganda through so-called "information" bureaus and other camouflaged organizations, are now protesting volubly and with tears that the conference has made a dreadful mistake, declaring angrily that it is impossible to treat with assassins and anarchists, and insisting that such a discussion as the conference has asked for would be little short of a crime. For all this the public should be grateful. It is well that the world should know, in order that it may remember, the names and the standing of those who have been working in secret for the restoration of the Russian monarchy, or speaking for the Grand Dukes and titled aristocracy who were Russia's curse, or scheming to recover the political influences which they lost by their own misconduct.

On the other hand, the implications which the action of the peace conference holds are obviously weighty. It must be assumed that the representatives of the Powers, in inviting a conference with the representatives of Russia, propose to go into the conference with entire sincerity and with an open mind; that the situation with regard to Russia, and the action to be taken in according or withholding recognition, have not been prejudged and virtually decided in advance; and that, in the interval, the time required for assembling and holding the conference and debating upon it afterwards is not to be used in furthering plans for some sort of coercion of Russia later. So far as the statement issued by the peace conference goes, it is unimpeachable in this point, but anything less than the strictest adherence to its spirit as well as to its letter would be a monstrous perversion of justice and equity, an open insult to Russia and its people, and a stain upon the honor of the peace negotiators and their governments which no subsequent good conduct in other direc-

tions would avail to wipe out. If the Powers allow themselves to deviate by a hair's breadth from the course which, by unescapable inference, they have now marked out for themselves, President Wilson would be justified in washing his hands of the peace conference and appealing to the peoples of the world against their governments.

How are the implications which inhere in the resolution of the peace conference to be realized in fact? Some of the prerequisites, at least, are clear. The delegates who are to represent the Allies and the United States in the discussions at Princes' Islands ought to be men of the highest character, competent by education, knowledge, and training to deal with the maze of facts and arguments which will be presented, and able to judge impartially the claims of the contending parties. There should be no place for partisans, or incompetents, or men with narrow vision, or reactionaries of any shade. No greater calamity could arise to cloud the future of Russia and the world's peace than that the men who represent the Allies and the United States, however high their intellectual equipment or technical repute, should nevertheless be of those in whose impartial judgment the world could have no confidence. Further, there ought to be no hurrying to get through and get away, and no attempt to restrict either the manner or the matter of debate. It is due to Russia that its spokesmen, whatever the character of the governments which they will represent, should be allowed to argue their case in their own way, to present all the data which they deem relevant, and to be listened to with the re-

spect which is implied in the invitation which they have received. It is to be hoped that the conference will allow them nothing less than this courtesy.

That the proceedings at Princes' Islands should also be public, and that every possible provision should be made for reporting them in the press, goes without saying. We must not forget that there are special reasons why the entire record in this case should be open to the light. The facts regarding Russia have for more than a year been withheld from the public or misrepresented. Russia is at this moment practically cut off, by deliberate action of the Allies and the United States, from communication with the rest of the world by cable, telegraph, wireless, or post; commerce has practically ceased, and personal communication goes on mainly in subterranean ways. Gross partisanship on the one hand and heated denunciation on the other still characterize the bulk of the Russian "news" which reaches the public through the press. This great wrong should be righted. If the conclusions of the conference are to stand as the mature opinion of the nations, and if Russia is to be brought once more within the world family of free peoples, it will only be because the peoples of the world, with all the facts before them, have approved the action of their representatives. It is not the Allied and American governments, but the people who are asked to sustain their decisions, who have now to be disillusioned and informed. The magnitude of the decision dictates that the conference, whatever else it does or fails to do, should take the world into its confidence and let all its doings be known.

### THE RED FUNERAL AT MOSCOW—An Extract From "The Red Heart of Russia"

[By BESSIE BEATTIE, War Correspondent of the San Francisco Bulletin]

Before the sacred shrine of the Iberian Gate a tiny lamp burned brightly; and an occasional soldier, strolling by, stopped to cross himself, and slowly to decipher the inscription that told how, by special provision of the Almighty, the ikon had been preserved from destruction throughout the raid of Napoleon.

While only a handful of people were killed in the Bolshevik revolution in Petrograd, Moscow's death-toll is estimated at from 750 persons to twice that number. Probably the former figure is more near correct.

Close beside the Kremlin wall, in the holiest of holy places the workmen and soldiers of Moscow dug the great trench that was to receive the bodies of their fallen comrades. All day they dug, and when night came they continued their work by the light of torches. The ghostly linden trees have stood watch over many strange scenes there on the edge of the Red Square, but none stranger than this crowd of silent men, speechlessly turning the earth through the long, chill, dark hours. By daybreak they had finished.

It was the day of the proletariat. All others stayed indoors. The streets, but for the mourners of the proletariat dead, were deserted. At eight o'clock in the morning the procession started, and all day long the people filed past—a vast, endless throng of them, men, women, and little children. There were no priests, no prayers. Strong young soldiers in mud-colored coats carried the red coffins on their shoulders, and above the heads of the crowd the crimson banners flowed like a river of blood.

A sobbing, singing mass of human beings, tragic and triumphant, filled the vast square. Cavalry troops rode by at attention, and girls with platons on their heads carried great oval band-boxed wreaths of artificial flowers. Sometimes a military band went by, playing a funeral march, and sometimes the voices of the marchers lifted in the deep, rhythmical strains of the "Hymn of Eter-

nal Memory." Men and women, old and young, wept as they saw the coffins lowered into that yawning trench.

If Mother Moscow wept that night, her tears fell quietly. She was in the presence of something big, something terrible, something magnificent—something unlike anything her old eyes had ever seen before.

There was another day, another funeral, another crowd of broken-hearted men and women. Their crumbs of comfort were more meagre, for theirs was the bitterness of defeat; but they also hugged the faith that the stalwart boys who lay stretched in their coffins had died defending an ideal.

Worlds of space lay between those two groups of mourners—they had no single thing in common but their grief. Their dead lay in the darkened recesses of great churches, and priests in funeral robes of black and silver said many masses for the repose of their souls. There were no red coffins, no crimson banners, no singing multitudes—only prayers and silent tears.

When it was all over—the killing and the burying—and there was nothing left but the joy of victory and the rancor of defeat, someone suddenly discovered that the lights before the shrine of the Virgin on the Iberian Gate had gone out.

All that was left of the sacred ikon was one bullet-wounded angel. Two soldiers passing by the shrine halted.

"Look," said one of them. "They said it was holy. It was just another of the dead—d lies they have been telling us!"

### COMRADE JOE KNIGHT OF EDMONTON

Vancouver Socialists will be delighted to welcome Comrade Joe Knight, of Edmonton, Alberta. This well-known organizer and speaker for the Socialist Party of Canada will speak from the platform of the Empress Theatre on Sunday evening, March 9.

Propaganda meeting Sunday evening at 8 o'clock, at the Empress Theatre, corner Hastings and Gore.