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THE CANADIAN FORWARD

IN THE SPIRIT OF THE PROLETARIAT THE REVOLUTION MUST FIRST ARISE

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY

LABOR PRODUCES ALL WEALTH UNTO LABOR IT SHOULD BELONG

New Series, VOL. 2, No. 14 | TORONTO CANADA | Published Twice a Month | July 24th. 1918

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 Reed is the Russian Consul for New York State for the Russian People's Government.

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II.

(Continued)

A VISIT TO THE RUSSIAN ARMY

Very early in the morning we awoke, stiff and numb. The sun sparkled through the frosty windows. A small boy came through with tea—chocolate candy in place of sugar. The train was poking down across rich Estland, through white birch forests glorious with yellow autumn foliage like bright flame; sometimes clumps of sombre pines, with the birch leaves breaking through as if the whole woods were on fire; long gently-rolling waves of opulant farm-land, yellow wheat stubble, emerald green grass still, and the pale blue-green of miles of cabbages; and immense farm-houses set in the midst of barns, the whole covered with one great thatched roof, on which thick moss was growing. On the slow rises of country, huge gray-stone windmills, weathered and mossy, whirled their agitated sails. Along the track marched a new roadbed with the ties in place at many points, and piles of rails.

Before the revolution no effort had been made to construct this badly-needed track—since March, however, the Russians had completed twenty-six versts of it; but the Germans, in the one month since the fall of Riga, had built more than thirty miles.

Soldiers began to thicken, at all stations in barns and farm-houses far seen; gigantic bearded men in dun coats, boots, peaked caps or shaggy **shapkis,** almost always with a touch of red somewhere about them. Patrols of Cossacks rode along the roads deep in black mud. Military trains, all box-cars with masses of men on top and inside, clanked past with broken echoes of mass-singing. The Red Cross flag made its appearance. At Valk an exicited sub-officer said we must go up in the town and get passes before proceeding further. The conductor announced that the train would leave in three minutes.

"You will be arrested! You will be arrested!" cried the sub-officer, shaking his finger at me. But we sat still, and no one ever again spoke of passes.

At Venden, beyond which no trains go, we disembarked in a swirling mob of soldiers going home. A sentry at the door was tired of examining passes, and just motioned us wearily through. No one seemed to know where the Staff headquarters was; finally an officer, after some thought, said he thought the Staff had ritired to Valk. "But you don't want the Staff," he added, "the Iskosol is in charge of things here." And he pointed to the town's chief building, formerly the Convention of Justices of the Peace, where sat the "Iskosol," or Central Executive of the Soldiers' Deputies.

In a large bare room on the second floor, amid the clack of busy stenographers and the come-and-go of couriers' deputations, functioned the nerve-center of the Twelfth Army, the spontaneous democratic organization created by the soldiers at the outbreak of the Revolution. A handsome young lieutenant, with Jewish features, stood behind a table, running his hand through his gray-streaked hair worriedly, while a torrent of agitated complaint beat upon him. Four delegations from the regiments in the trenches, mostly soldiers, with a couple of officers mixed in, were appealing to the Iskosol all at once; one regiment was almost without boots — the Iskosol had promised six hundred pairs and had only delivered sixty; a very ragged private spokesman for another committee, complained that the artillery had been given their winter fur coats, but the cavalry was still in summer uniform... One sub-officer, a mere boy,kept shouting angrily that the Iskosol buzzed around a good deal, but nothing seemed to be accomplished. . .

"**Da da**" responded the officer vaguely, "Yes, yes. **S chass, s chass.** I will write immediately to the Commissariat. . . . "

On a little table were piled heaps of pamphlets and newspapers, among which I noticed Elisee Reclus' "Anarchy and the Church." A soldier sat in a broken chair nearby, reading aloud the **Isvestia**—official organ of the Petrograd Executive Committee of the all-Russian Soviets—about the formation of the new government; and as he declaimed the names of the Cadet ministers, the listeners gave vent to laughter and ironical "hoorah's." Near the window stood Voitinsky, assistant Commissar of the Twelfth Army, with his semi-military coat buttoned up to his chin — a little man whose blue eyes snapped behind thick glasses, with bristling red hair and beard; he who was a famous exile in Siberia, and the author of **"Smertniki,"**. a book more terrible than "Seven Who Were Hanged. . . . "

These Comissars are civilians, suggested by the revolutionery Commisahs of the French revolutionary government in 1793; chief representatives of the Provisional Government at the front, appointed by the Government with the approval of the Soviets.

In precise, short sentences Voitinsky explained that military operations were not his province, unless he was consulted; but he had just that day come to Venden at the request of a general to decide a question of tactics.

"My job'" he said, "is to build a military machine which will retake Riga. But conditions here are desperate. The army lacks everything—food, clothes, boots, munitions. The roads are awful, and it has been raining steadily for two weeks. The horses of the transport are underfed and worn out, and it is all they can do to haul enough bread to keep us from starving. But the most serious lack at the front, more serious than the lack of food & clothes, is the lack of boots, pamphlets and newspapers. You see, since the revolution the army has absorbed tons of literature, propaganda, and has a permit, but encourage the importation of all kinds of literature in the army—it is necessary in order to keep up the spirits of the troops. Since the Kornilov affair, and especially since the Democratic Congress, the soldiers have been very uneasy. Yes, many have simply laid down their arms and gone home. The Russian army is sick of war . . . "

Voitinsky had had no sleep for thirty-six hours. Yet he fairly radiated quick energy as he saluted and ran down the steps to his mud-covered automobile—bound on a forty-mile ride through the deep mud, in the shadow of the coming rain-storm to judge a dispute between officers and soldiers. . . . .

Growling and grumbling the regimental delegations went their way and the evish subaltern, whose name was Tumarkin, led us into another room and passed around cigarettes, while he recounted the history af the Iskosol.

It was the first revolutionary organization of soldiers in active service.

"You see," said Tumarkin, "the row in Petrograd took us by surprise. Of course we knew that sooner or later . . . but it came all of a sudden, as such things do. There were a crowd of us revolutionists in the army—I myself was a political exile in France when the war broke out.

"Well, in the revolution of 1905 there was established a Soviet of Workmen in Petrograd, and we tried to make one in the army, at various places. But the masses of the soldiers were ignorant of Socialist ideas and indifferent—so we failed then. Afterward we realized our mistake, and began to work on the army; but in February, 1917, when things broke loose in Peter, we were scared. We thought they might send us to suppress the revolution. So we hastily met, about a dozen of us, and started to win over the army. . .

"News from Petrograd was rare and contradictory. Our own staff officers were hostile. We didn't know if the revolution was winning or not. . . . For a week we hurried from place to place, holding soldiers' meetings explaining, arguing; and at every meeting we made the men pass a resolution swearing that they would face death for the revolution.

"On March 9, just eleven days after the outbreak in the capital, we got together a Soviet of the army in Riga — one delegate from each company, battery and squadron — three thousand in all. They elected an Executive Committee of sixty men, which began to establish communications with other revolutionary military organizations. Most of the time we didn't know even if there were any other bodies like ours, but simply telegraphed to 'Revolutionary Soldiers, Fourth Army'—like that. And for signature we made a code-word of the first three syllables of our organization's name — "Is-ko-sol." All the other Executive Committees call themselves "Armikom."

"Three days after organizing we began to publish our paper, **Russki Front.** What job it was, to educate, to organize ! The officers didn't understand the revolution—they had been trained to a caste apart; but there was no killing of officers in this army. Only expulsions. . . . Before we left Riga the **Russki Front** had a circulation of 25,000 among the soldiers, and 5,000 in the city; to support it we proclaimed a Contribution Day for the Soldiers' Press, and raised 58,000 roubles. . . . "

The Iskosol is only one typical manifestation of the immense fertility of representative organization, a thousand times duplicated, which prevades Russian military and civil life now. It is primarily the organ by which the soldiers of the Twelfth Army take part in the furious new political life of the country; but in the chaos left by the break-down of the old regime, it has been forced to assume extraordinary functions. For example: The Iskosol fulfills the duties of commissariat department; it attempts to reconcile differences between officers and men; conducts primary and secondary schools among all bodies of troops in repose or reserve; and in certain cases like the retreat from Riga, where the commanding staff was utterly demoralized, takes actual command of the troops. Its members are scattered throughout the army, sent from place

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