

# RED RUSSIA

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

## GOOD TRAINING.

A youth with a bright, happy face and towed hair was the chairman. He told us how the Lettish regiments had been in the front ranks for six months without rest, and they had sent word to the Ministry of War in Petrograd that if they were not relieved by October first, they would simply leave the trenches. One regiment had been reduced from four thousand men to seven, and all were without adequate food or clothing.

"How can the men stand it?" I asked.

"The officers say it is good training," he answered, and everybody laughed. A soldier near the door cried, "You don't see my officers going barefoot." And again they laughed.

The Committee seemed highly amused at the officer's accusations.

"They say we are jealous of the workmen in the cities. But we are ourselves workmen, and we will share the short hours and high wages they have won for us, when we return to the cities after the war. Most of us are union men. . . There are no bolsheviks in the army? Well, this committee in this brigade is bolshevik. We are not illiterate; on the contrary, less than two per cent, cannot read and write. The Letts all go to school. As for interfering with military matters, we have nothing to do with them whatever, except in the case of mass movement of troops, which are always arranged beforehand."

## REVOLUTIONARY TRIBUNALS.

There had been no killing of reactionary officers in this Brigade, even in the Kornilov days — although Colonel Kruskin went around at that time openly praying for the success of the counter-revolution. Several brutal officers had, however, been forced to retire, and one was brought before a revolutionary tribunal for beating a soldier; but he died in battle before the judgment.

Courts martial in the Twelfth Army had been replaced by revolutionary military courts. Each company had a petty court of five elected members—soldiers or officers; above that was the full regimental court, composed of 28 soldiers and 14 officers, elected by the full regiment; and a presidium of six chosen by this assembly sat permanently for the trial of minor offenses — such as stealing. If the soldiers were dissatisfied with their officers, they appealed first to the Commissar of the Army, and if he did nothing, to the Central Executive Army Committee.

"We know," said the chairman, "which officers are for us and which are against us. We know that Riga was betrayed. On the first of August we had aeroplanes, heavy artillery; but when the Germans attacked all those things had been sent away." He shrugged. "But what can we do? We must defend the Revolution and Petrograd. We must watch them, and make them fight."

They showed us copies of all orders of the staff, kept carefully on file

here; the chart of location of all troops of the brigade, which had been quartered by the committee; requisitions and purchases of food, clothing, shells, guns; and the record of the political transactions of the soldier party-groups with the Soviets and with the Government.

"We're the Ministry of War," said one member, jocularly.

"The Ministry of War? We're the whole government . . ."

## "NOBODY LEFT IN SIBERIA."

In the loft of the barn were quartered several batteries of light artillery, part of a Siberian regiment which had just arrived from Irkutsk. With their enormous grey wool shapkas, boots made from wild beast hides with the fur outside, new blouses and ruddy faces, they looked like another race. They complained bitterly about their food.

My companion picked out a boy who looked about thirteen. "Aren't you too young to be a soldier? Why, you're only just big enough to have a girl."

"If I am old enough to be in love, I'm old enough to fight," answered the boy. "When the war broke out, I was only fifteen, but now I'm a man."

"Aren't you afraid somebody will steal your girl while you are away?"

The boy shrugged. "There's nobody left in Siberia to steal her," he said simply.

Russia's losses in the war are already more than seven millions at the front — twice that in the rear. Four years. Children have grown up to manhood, put on uniform, gone to the trenches. . . "There is nobody left in Siberia. . ."

## A MARKET FOR LOOT.

Sunday in Venden. A gusty heaven overhead, thin clouds opening in a washed blue sky, with a watery sun riding there. Underfoot, black mud, trampled by thousands of boots, townspeople and peasants, who had driven in for miles around, thronging the Lutheran church, with mingled Russian soldiers, very curious but respectful. In the open market place the bartering of odds and ends of loot was going full blast. Immensely high above the town an aeroplane drifted southwest, and all about it the firmament was splotted with white and black smoke-bursts. The sound of explosions and the hum of the motore came faintly. People looked up carelessly and said, "Niemtssy" (German).

Along about midday tables appeared in two corners of the square. Then the banners—the revolutionary banners, in every shade of red, with gold, silver and white letters on them moving bright and splendid through the great crowd. Speakers mounted the tables. It was a double mass-meeting, Russian in one corner, Lettish in another, forbidden by the Commandant & frowned upon by the Iskosol. All the town had turned out for it, and most of the fifteen thousand troops. And there was no doubt of the sentiments of that audience —

from the great flags behind the tables, one inscribed, "Power to the People: Long live Peace;" and the other, "Bread, Peace and Freedom;" to the thunderous roars that met the hot words of the speakers, denouncing the government for not forcing the peace conference, daring it to suppress the Soviets, and dwelling much upon the Imperialistic designs of the Allies in the war.

## A PEACE MEETING.

Surely never since history began has a fighting army held such a peace meeting in the midst of battle. The Russian soldiers have won freedom from the Tsar, they do not believe that there is any reason for continuing a war which they consider to have been imperialistic from the first, they are strongly impregnated with international Socialism — and yet they fight on.

Under the wintry sun the banners moved in a little wind, alive and glittering, and in thousands the dun-colored soldiers-masses stood listening, motionless, to any man who wanted to speak. The chairman of the Iskolostreel managed the meeting with a tiny white flag. Overhead always the aeroplanes passed and passed, sometimes circling nearby. From far rumbled the thunder of heavy artillery. — It was agitation around the church spire. And past the end of the square went unceasingly long trains of trucks and waggons.

There was too much noise. The speakers came near, there was an uneasy craning of necks — for the village had been bombed three times, and many people killed. The chairman of the two meetings signalled with their little flags, the speakers leaped down, tables rose upon shoulders, and great red banners dipped and moved. . . . First went the Letts, headed by a band of women singing the mournful, stark revolutionary songs of the country; then the banners with Lettish inscriptions; then the Russian banners, and after them all the thousands and thousands, pouring like a muddy river in flood along the narrow street. In at a great gate we went and past the baronial manor of the Siever family, lieg-lords of Venden. Here on a spur of rock rose the tremendous ruins of the Medieval castle of the Teutonic Knights, and below the ground fell steeply down, through ancient trees all yellow and crimson with autumn leaves, to a pond with lilies. From the window of the high keep one could see miles across the fertile, smiling country, woods, lakes, chateaux, fields, all chocolate brown or vivid green, foliage all shades from gold to blood-red, gorgeous.

Rushing down torrent-like through the trees the Lettish banners moved with wailing song to the hill under the castle, while the Russians paused midway down a steep slope and set their table under a great oak tree. Around the two tribunes the people packed themselves, hung in the trees, heaped on the roofs of some old sheds. . . . Speaker followed speaker, all through the long afternoon. Five hours the immense crowd stood there, intent, listening with all its ears, with all its soul. Like a glacier, patient, slow-moving, a mass of dun caps and brown faces carpeting the steep hillside. Spontaneous roars of applause, scattered angry cries burst from it. Almost all the speakers were bolsheviks, and their unbroken refrain was, "All the power to the Soviets, land for the peasants,

an immediate democratic peace." . . .

Toward the last, someone undertook to deliver an old-fashioned "Patriotic" oration — but the fierce blasts of disapproval quickly drove him from the platform. Then a little professor with gold-rimmed spectacles tried to deliver on the Lettish national movement; but no one paid the least attention to him. . . .

## A RELIC OF THE DEAD PAST.

On a knoll over the water was a black marble tomb, lettered as follows:

"Dedicated to the memory of the creator of this park, Count Carl Sievers, by his tenderly-loving and high-regarding son, Oberofmeister Senator Count Emanuel Sievers, this memorial is erected on this little hill, which was named Carlsberg after his own name Carl. On this spot the, at that time the last-surviving lord of Castle-Wenden, together with the Duckernschen Peasants' Council and their wives, ate lunch, while the peasants' children danced on the nearby flat place."

"Thereby had he, with his own artistic sense, with his own creative talents, an idea to dig a large pit in the midst of a stream from the rich springs of Duckernschen, and to place here a great pool, by himself beautifully imagined, in which the noble ruins of the old Ordens-Schloss could reflect themselves."

A couple of soldiers came lounging up. One slowly spelled out the first words.

"Graf: Count!" he exclaimed, and spat. "Well, he's dead, like so many comrades. He was probably a good guy." . . .

Around the monument the "great pool", across the rustic bridges and in and out of the artificial grottoes of the aristocratic old park, roamed hundreds of gaunt men in filthy uniforms. The ancient turf was torn to mud. Rags, papers, cigarette stubs littered the ground. Up the hillsides were banked the masses of the proletariat, under red banners of the social revolution. Surely in all its stirring history the Ordens-Schloss never looked down on any scene as strange as this.

Beyond the park music was going down the road toward the little Lutheran cemetery. They were burying three Lettish sharpshooters, killed in action yesterday. First came two carts, each with a soldier who strewed the road with evergreen boughs. At the gate of the cemetery one of the soldiers brushed off his hands, heaved a sigh, took out a cigarette and lighted it, and began to weep. The whole town was now streaming down along the road, peasant women in their Sunday kerchiefs, old men in rusty black soldiers. In their midst moved the military band, slowly playing that extraordinary Lettish death-march, which has such a triumphant, happy note. Then the white coffins, with aluminum plaques saying: "Eternal Peace."

Peace, peace—how many times you hear that word at the front. The revolution means peace, popular government means peace, and last of all bitterly, death means peace. No funeral has the poignant solemnity of a funeral at the front. Almost all these men and women have lost some men in the war; they know what it means death. And these hundreds of soldiers, with stiff, drawn faces; they know these three dead — perhaps

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