

"Our" Barbarous "Allies" In Russia

Speaking in the House of Commons on the 29th May, Colonel Wedgwood, who has recently joined the I.L.P., asked:—

"Who are these Finns with whom we are in co-operation in the attack on Petrograd? The Finnish Government has had a chequered history. When the Revolution came in Russia, in March, 1917, Finland at once proclaimed its independence, and there ensued in Finland a Social Revolution imposed upon the Political Revolution. You got what was called the Red Terror. The Red Terror was always bad—deplorable—but the Red Terror was put down with the help of German Armies which were landed in Finland, and, in co-operation with the White Guards of Finland, suppressed the Revolution. They suppressed it by probably the most shocking series of atrocities that have ever been committed, even during the whole course of this accursed war. The facts have only recently come out. They have been published in the *New Statesman*, and, as the Right Hon. Gentleman knows, by a man whose word is to be trusted, indeed a man who is trusted so much as to be employed by the Government. The terror in Finland is created by these same White Guards whom we are now reckoning as Allies in a further attack upon the Social Revolution. The number of men and women arrested during the first weeks of May, 1918, was about 90,000, and of these from 15,000 to 20,000 were shot out of hand—this is out of a population which is probably under a million, and they were shot without trial. Red prisoners were commonly decimated, and then the survivors were searched for 'suspects,' and any who were declared by any White present to be specially dangerous, were despatched. In that way the following were executed:—At Rehemaki, 5000; at Labti 2000; at Viborg, 4000; and so on. At Labti 2000 women were taken out early one morning in the second week of May, a fortnight after the end of the fighting, and were mown down in a batch with machine guns. This is a White Terror about which the Government do not circulate White Papers. The remaining 74,000, at the beginning of June, male and female, were confined during the summer and autumn in prison camps, and were subjected to a 'regime' of almost incredible barbarity. . . . What I do protest against is, having our honour soiled by connection with people such as these, and a Government which has already, out of 7500 prisoners, got rid of 2851, that is over one-third, who died in four months. They did not die merely from starvation. They died because they were deprived of water. There was not even the defence that they could not get food enough for these persons. These cases of starvation cannot have been less than 13,000, nor probably more than 18,000. That is your Government in Finland, the Government recognized almost immediately upon the publication of these facts in the *New Statesman*. These are the people that our fleet is at present supporting.

Then turn to your other Allies. There is General Denikin, who is commanding in South Russia. We are sending out an expedition to Sebastopol to help this new Government. I do not think that Denikin has been recognized yet, but he will be before long, especially if it is realized that he is carrying on warfare on these lines. A leading White politician—that is also from the *New Statesman*—puts number of workmen executed when Denikin occupied Rostov at 23,000. It is safe to say that if the Whites capture a Red town there will be a hundred executions for every one which occurs if a White town is captured by the Reds. At Jekaterinoslay Denikin ordered every Red Russian found in possession of Red literature to be shot forthwith. At Bafarsk, in the Don district, every man with a son in the Red Guard was killed. In one place every tenth workman was shot as an example to the rest. The White leaders regard the literal decimation of the working classes as an absolutely necessary preliminary to the establishment of any form of Government in Russia.

STORY OF THE WHITE TERROR.

Scathing Speech by Colonel Wedgwood.

I pass from Denikin. We have not recognized him yet, but we have recognized Admiral Kolchak, and in reference to the way in which Kolchak is carrying on his operations it is only fair to say that, after all, I believe that he is a fairly honest man. But it is doings of his subordinates. It is to them that we must attribute the cruelties hideously uncivilized warfare that is going on in Russia. I saw a British friend who is back from Siberia—

Commander Sir E. Nicholl—On a point of order. In Heaven's name, what has this to do with the Army Estimates?

Colonel Wedgwood—I must protest against being called to order by an Hon. Member who, before he was elected to Parliament, told a story of a German submarine, which subsequently was denied from the Front Bench. How is Kolchak's army carrying on in Siberia at the present time? I saw a British officer who is back from that country about a fortnight ago. He was not by way of being an advanced political thinker at all, and he pointed out that the Russian Generals suffered from certain classes that they are to appear for Conscription at certain places and he says that none of them turn up. The result is the troops are sent to the villages to bring the young men into the Army. But, unfortunately, when these troops get to the villages the young men have all vanished and naturally the officers in charge of these troops are somewhat exercised at failing to find their quarry, and instead of simply shooting the people who are left, they flog them and then hang them. An army recruited on those lines I do not think is likely to be very efficient, but it must be obvious that as long as you have recruiting by force of people who two years ago were dead tired of fighting, you are bound to get shocks if you enlist them by force under the direction of subordinates who are capable of any butchering in order to enforce the autocratic rule of military despotism in Siberia.

I do not want to labor this point about Admiral Kolchak, and I can not do better than end by reading an extract from a letter which I received last week from the same country. It will indicate the difficulties which are in the way of recognition of the present de facto rule in Siberia:—

"The fact is that there is a blank sight more Bolsheviks now than there were ever before in Siberia. This is a fact admitted on all sides in the East. In the next to the last Municipal Elections, the Bolsheviks cast 13,000 out of a total of 24,000 votes. There is military law both here and in Omsk and all along the railway. Omsk itself is legally in what you might describe as a state of siege—nobody allowed out after nine at night, and so forth. The Japanese staff are publishing a statement in the legal Press recounting 48 conflicts with Bolsheviks since the end of December, ranging from skirmishes with parties of raiders to a regular pitched battle for the taking of Blagoveschenk, lasting half a day, in which the Bolshevik forces were over 1000. The Japanese lost 48 killed, including a major.

The Americans publicly refused to take any part in these affairs on the ground that these insurgents are not Bolsheviks at all, but peasants dissatisfied with the present regime. This fact was emphasized by a local paper, which pointed out that the very villages and counties that had just risen against the Bolsheviks were those now being suppressed as Bolsheviks by the Japanese. There was one classic case of a man by the name of Bezsmerty, which means 'deathless,' who led his village against the Bolsheviks and was condemned to death by them and a price put on his head. Now he led his village against the present regime, and was condemned to death and shot as a Bolshevik.

The Zemstvos have been forbidden to discuss any but economic subjects, after the Council of the Zemstvos of the Maritime Provinces passed a resolution declaring that the present chaos and political unrest were due to the unpopular character of the Omsk Government and its reactionary tendencies. The essentials are these: the present dictatorship of Admiral Kolchak is the result of long intrigues, culminating in a coup d'etat, with the aftermath of a series of arrests and the murder of members of the Constituent Assembly. Admiral Kolchak himself is an honest man, but he is surrounded with reactionaries who face him with facts accomplished. His representative in the Far East is General Hoorath, and the whole Government is now purely bourgeois. After the coup d'etat, the S. R. Party refused to recognize the Government, as did the Czech National Council here. This Council was dissolved by General Stephanik, Czech Minister for War, who came from Paris to do it, but it does not alter the fact that the coup d'etat finished the Czechs once for all with helping these people. They say—'We are Democrats and we do not wish to help reaction in Russia.' I know this, because it has appeared time and again in interviews with Czech officers, and talks with the soldiers, and because I have heard it from them myself. They are disgusted with the present Russian regime. This Government does not represent the wishes of the people, and it is an axiom here that if the Allied troops were withdrawn it would fall at once.'

When we see that people like the Czecho-Slovaks, whom we were all praising, are now themselves not disposed to support any longer this Government, and when we find that this Government would fall of itself automatically directly British bayonets and Japanese bayonets are removed from Siberia, we ought to think once or twice before we permit the British Army to engage in expeditions in conjunction with such very doubtful colleagues. The war upon Russia ought to cease. The Right Hon. Gentleman got a great number of British troops sent out very recently because there was a scare that Archangel was in danger. Archangel never was in danger, but it served a sufficiently useful excuse for getting large reinforcements sent. They were sent to extricate the garrison. The garrison is coming back, but the new troops are remaining and not only remaining, but preparing for a spring forward on Petrograd, a further advance into that wilderness of Russia, that chaos of starvation that exists now. I do protest that not only should the Army be withdrawn from Archangel, but from all participation in any further expeditions to Russia, at least, that we should do nothing in that country except in strict co-operation with the American government. If the Americans do not think their troops should be sent to Russia, or if they think that their troops should not be kept in Russia, undergoing all the hardships of that climate, as well as undergoing the hardships of fighting an unjust cause, then it is not good enough for English troops either. We should clear out of the place, and let them stew in their own juice and fix up their own quarrels. Let us understand this: What is happening in Russia is an expedition or war against that country, an expedition which is not inspired by a desire to put an end to atrocities, but by a desire to put an end to the Social Revolution."

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