

Our Book Review

Downtrodden and almighty
Art thou, our Mother Russia.
—Nekrasov.

"TEN DAYS THAT SHOOK THE WORLD"

John Reed (371 pages, \$2.00)
Boni & Liveright, Publishers, 109 West 40th St.,
New York

(Continued from Last Week)

In the notes and explanations preceding the book proper, the author makes the statement that there were between three and four million trade unionists in Russia when the Bolshevik revolution occurred. This number seems to us to be above the mark. Phillips Price writing from Moscow in 1918 places the number at from three to four hundred thousand twelve months before the March revolution. If Comrade Reed's figures are correct, the organization work carried on during the Kerensky regime must have been extremely effective; but we hardly think they are correct or the Bolsheviks would not have had so much trouble with the Vikzhel, the central executive committee of the Railway Workers' Union.

This body adopted a hostile attitude to the Bolsheviks and played just such a part as we might expect from the A. F. of L. They were the strongest union in Russia; they threatened general strike on the slightest pretext and refused to transport Soviet troops. Trains carrying Red soldiers and sailors had to be moved by force. They maintained the vainglorious contention that they were the saviours of the country and only after the consolidation of power were they forced to place their service at the disposal of the Soviet government.

In several places, however, we get a glimpse of the fact that the rank and file, just as in America, had a different point of view. Mass meetings were held protesting against the actions of the executive. Several thousand sailors moving to Moscow were denied transportation by a member of the Vikzhel. The sailors were about to take the station by force of arms when another door opened discovering some brakemen and a fireman or two. "We will take you," they said, "to Moscow, or to Vladivostok, if you like. Long live the Revolution." Again it is the worker in the ranks who saves the situation.

Smolny Institute, the headquarters of the Bolsheviks, was cut off from the rest of the city, the telephone operators refusing to connect them; the postmen refused to handle their mail; telegraphers would not despatch their messages. The "autocracy of labor" sabotaged as did the bourgeoisie.

This weapon, sabotage, that the workers have never learned to use, appears to have been the natural one for the dethroned masters. Coal mines were flooded by their erstwhile owners, machinery destroyed and locomotives crippled. Bank clerks were bribed to strike and so dislocate the machinery of finance. The employees of sixteen government departments struck work and still the revolution swept on its course. Uneouth seamen, with hands like the knuckle-end of a ham, operated the plugs on the telephone switchboards; factory workers waded laboriously through the ledgers of the State bank; they filled their square selves into round holes and brought order out of the chaotic conditions thrust on the country by the intelligentsia in the interest of an incompetent bourgeoisie.

This same bourgeoisie did not belie their fellows in other lands. They did not scruple to use Red Cross wagons to transport ammunition nor to shoot down delegates bearing the white flag. All of their kind lined up to help them. Officers connected with the Allied embassies offered advice at their canels and mounted arms for them in the streets. They used the boy scouts to distribute their literature and the students of the military schools to do their fighting, leaving them in the lurch when failure had crowned their efforts. They did all these things they accuse the workers of today. They impeded production and transportation, in spite of the fact that soldiers' lives were at stake.

The bourgeois Mensheviks who had lost out in the Workers' and Soldiers' Congress, forming in line and marching in procession "to die with their brothers in the Winter Palace," might have ended in tragedy had the processionists been any other than bourgeois. As it was it turned out a farce. The sailors on guard there offered to spank them and they wended their way elsewhere to die. Their words were loud but their antics shallow!

Thwarted in all other directions the bourgeois played its last card, its final weapon—the printing press. After the March revolution, the Russian worker, barred from the avenues of information open to the slaves of other countries, displayed an insatiable thirst for knowledge. How rapidly he learned to read and write is more or less a matter of history now. All parties circulated indiscriminately among the masses; newspapers, dodgers and proclamations explaining their particular programs and philosophies. A prominent member of the Social Revolutionaries admitted to John Reed, the "necessity of lies to create a certain frame of mind" and if the others did not admit it they acted in accord with the fact. For the same reason our local press is now publishing phoney cablegrams telling of Bolshevik reverses, cablegrams which come in the mails and were manufactured in the back rooms of a London press agency.

The bourgeoisie desired to remain the exclusive manufacturers of public opinion. The Bolsheviks were decried as traitors to the working class, their peace, a lie, their bread a hoax, and their land a fairy tale. One paper advocated a Bolshevik massacre as the easiest way out of the situation. Carloads of literature were launched daily, from the Bolshevik headquarters carrying the message of working class salvation to the toiling masses, and from the bourgeois "screaming, cursing and phophsying evil."

Under the Kerensky regime the Bolshevik papers were ruthlessly suppressed. The soldiers complained that they were prevented from getting them in the trenches even when they were published. But with the power in their hands now the Bolsheviks threatened to handle mercilessly such papers as would incite to resistance or deliberately prevent news. They showed the class nature of the struggle and the absolute foolishness of allowing the bourgeoisie any means of expression.

Lenin speaking on the Press Decree makes the point clear: "We Bolsheviks have always said that when we reached a position of power we would close the bourgeois press. To tolerate the bourgeois newspapers would mean to cease being a Socialist. When one makes a revolution, one cannot mark time, one must always go forward—or go back. He who now talks about freedom of the press goes backward, and halts our headlong course toward Socialism."

When the history of the Revolution comes to be written in full, the sailors of the fleet, "the flower and pride of the revolutionary forces," as Trotsky calls them, will loom largely in its pages. The standard of education was higher among them than any other body of the Russian working class and it showed its effects during the course of the Revolution.

The maintenance of order in Petrograd through those troublous days was imposed on them and the factory workers in the Red Guard. They were the men entrusted with the work of offsetting the wine pogroms. They destroyed hundreds of thou-

sands of bottles of wine, millions of dollars' worth, all of which was meant to lure the workers from their revolutionary purpose. When Petrograd needed food, in detachments of 5,000, the sailors scoured the country from the Ukraine to Siberia, and when the factories were almost compelled to close down for lack of fuel, the battleships emptied their bunker-coal on the wharves of the city. The sailors it was that prevented the mob from lynching the members of the Provisional Government after they had been driven from the Winter Palace by the shells from the Aurora. Kerensky pleaded to the Cossack, General Krasnov, not to allow any sailors to come near him; and when he made his inglorious flight the only good thing about him was the dress he was disguised in, the uniform of a Kronstadt sailor.

All through the course of the Revolution, these sailors from Kronstadt, from the Baltic and the Black Sea fleets, remained firm and steadfast to the revolutionary battlecry, and the self-imposed iron discipline of the men from the fleets stiffened the morale of the fighting forces of the Workers' Republic.

Just when I was coming to the most interesting part of the book, the Editor (so-called) came down on me, all four feet together, and brayed, "didn't I think I ought to publish a paper of my own."

The doctor says he'll be out of hospital in a week.

The next and concluding installment of this review will commence by giving John Reed's graphic description of the almost miraculous changing of the proletarian rabble of Petrograd (men, women and children) into a disciplined force for the successful defence of the city against the oncoming counter-revolutionary army W. B.

THE SAME GOAL

Charles E. Hughes predicts downfall for Bolshevism in Russia and says "it does not deserve to be counted even as Socialism." But is he warranted in making this prediction or correct in his description of the movement? Lenine has been in power for nearly two years and can claim to lead "the oldest popular administration in Continental Europe." Premiers and cabinets of long-established governments have come and gone while this grim revolutionist has held undisputed control. What chance is there that he will be overthrown if his followers see him treating on equal terms with other powers and are told that revolution is spreading all over the world? To say that Lenine, in his objects, is anything but a Marxian international socialist seems to us to misread his writings. In advocating dictatorship by the proletariat—that is, the workmen of the cities—as the original step toward, first, the "emancipation" of the peasant population, and, later, a general levelling, he is in accord with the great genius, Karl Marx, who gave form to modern socialism. If his end is a simple communal state practically without laws, he does not disagree with the writings of Friedrich Engels—Marx's "right-hand"—or with the dream of other socialist philosophers. The difference between Bolshevism and Menshevism as it appears in the works of the two schools is almost entirely a difference in immediate practical methods of bringing the proletarian dictatorship about. Lenine is for the "direct method," for violent domination; the others for orderly political processes. It is no surprise to learn from Simeon Strunsky, who looks upon socialism with the indulgent eye of a good-humored student, that the Socialist Conference at Berné was overwhelmingly against the ways of Bolshevism. But so were the liberals of the world against the methods of the French revolutionists, who, nevertheless, almost broke the heart of Europe before their madness came to an end.—Collier's Weekly.