

RED RUSSIA

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

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(Continued from last issue.)

"An Interview With Trotzky."

That very day Trotzky gave me an interview about the projects of the new power—the "dictatorship of the proletariat"—which Volodarski had described to me as being in form of "a loose government, sensitive to popular will, giving local forces full play." He said:

"The Provisional Government is absolutely powerless. The bourgeoisie is in control, but this control is masked by a fictitious coalition with the moderate parties. Now, during the revolution, one sees revolts of peasants who are tired of waiting for their promised land, and all over the country, in all the toiling classes, the same disgust is evident. The domination of the bourgeoisie is only possible by civil war. The Kornilov method is the only way by which the bourgeoisie can dominate. But it is force which the bourgeoisie lacks. . . . The army is with us. The conciliators and pacificators, Social Revolutionists and Mensheviks, have lost all authority—because the struggle between the peasants and the landlords, between the workers and the bankers, between the soldiers and the Kornilovist officers, has become more bitter, more irreconcilable than ever. Only by the struggle of this popular mass, only by the victory of the proletarian dictatorship, can the revolution be achieved and the people saved! The Soviets are the most perfect representatives of the people perfect in their revolutionary experience, in their ideas and objects. Based directly on the army in the trenches, the workers in the factories, and the peasants in the fields, they are the backbone of the Revolution.

"They have tried to create a power disdaining the Soviets, and they have created only powerlessness. Counter-revolutionary schemes of all sorts organize now in the corridors of the Council of the Russian Republic. The Cadet party represents the counter-revolution militant. On the other side, the Soviets represent the cause of the people. Between the two camps there are no serious groups. It is the inevitable lutte finale. The bourgeoisie counter-revolution organizes all its forces and waits for a moment to attack us. Our answer will be decisive. We will finish the work scarcely begun in February, and advanced during the Kornilov affair. . . ."

He described to me how the new government would be composed; instead of a ministry, the different departments of the state would be directed by a series of collegia, headed by titular commissars, who would be responsible to the Central Executive Committee of the All-Russian Soviets—the new parliament. I asked about the new government's foreign policy.

"Our first act," said Trotzky, "will be to call for an immediate armistice on all fronts, and a conference of the peoples to discuss democratic peace terms. The quantity of democracy we get in the peace settlement depends upon the quantity of revolutionary response there is in Europe. If we create here a government of the Soviets, that will be a powerful factor for immediate peace in Europe; for this government will address itself immediately and directly to the peoples, over the heads of their governments, proposing an armistice. At the moment of the conclusion of peace the pressure of the Russian Revolution will be in the direction of: no annexations, no indemnities, the rights of peoples to dispose of themselves, and a Federated Republic of Europe.

"At the end of this war I see Europe recreated, not by diplomats, but by the proletariat. The Federated Republic of Europe—the United States of Europe—that is what must be. National autonomy no longer suffices. Economic evolution demands the abolition of national frontiers. If Europe is to remain in national groups, then Imperialism will recommence its work. Only a Federated Republic can give peace to Europe—and to the world." He smiled, that singularly fine and somewhat melancholy smile of his. "But without the action of the European masses, these ends cannot be realized—now."

It is fashionable among the bourgeoisie to speak of the Bolshevik coup d'etat as an "adventure." Adventure it is, and one of the most splendid mankind ever embarked on, sweeping into history at the head of the toiling masses, and staking everything on their vast and simple desires. Peace, land, bread. Why not? Already the machinery was created by which the land of the great estates could be taken over and distributed to the peasants, each according to his powers. Already the factory shop committees were ready to put into operation workmen's control of industry. The different nationalities of Russia were all ready for months to assume the administration of their own people. In every village, town, city, district and government, Soviets of Workmen, Soldiers and Peasants' Delegates were prepared to assume the local powers of government. Liberate the local forces of Russia—how simple, and how tremendous! As for peace—well, unless all signs lied, the peoples of the world were sick of and disillusioned with the war. . . . What it meant was simply the liberation of the local forces of the world.

If the Bolsheviks Had Not Won.

At the same meeting of the Petrograd Soviet, on October 17th, some soldiers, workmen and peasants spoke, revealing very clearly the

feeling of the masses, and some officers, members of the Army Central Committees, the Central Committee of Soviets, etc., opposed them. As for these last, suffice it to say that they opposed with all their might "All power to the Soviets"—and there was not a proletarian among them, just as there were no bourgeois among the representatives of the masses. The division was clean.

The peasant described the agrarian disorders in Kaluga Government, which he said were caused by the government's arresting members of the Land Committees who were trying to distribute the uncultivated fields of the local great estates. "This Kerensky is nothing but a comrade to the pomiestchiks (landlords)," he cried. "And they know we will take the land anyway at the Constituent Assembly, so they are trying to destroy the Constituent Assembly."

A workman from the Obukovsky avod, a government shop, described how the superintendents and managers were trying to close down certain departments one by one, complaining of lack of material, of fuel, etc., and how the shop committee had discovered that there was no real necessity for closing down. "They are trying to drive the revolutionary Petrograd workers out of the city," he declared. "It is provocation—they want to starve us to death, or drive us to violence. . . ."

Among the soldiers one began, "Comrades! I bring you greetings from the spot where men are digging their own graves and call them trenches! We must have peace!"

Another man told of the electoral campaign now being waged in the Fifth Army of the Constituent Assembly. "The officers, and especially the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries, are trying deliberately to cripple the Bolshevik campaign. Our papers are not allowed to go to the trenches. Our speakers are arrested. Our mail is censored."

"Why don't you speak about the lack of bread?" cried a voice. "They are sabotaging the food supply. They want to starve Red Petrograd!"

And so it went. Now is there any truth in the accusation that the bourgeoisie were trying to wreck the Revolution? I happened, barely two weeks before, to have an exceedingly significant talk with one of the great Russian capitalists, Stepan Georgevitch Lianosov—"the Russian Rocketeller," as he is called.

"We manufacturers," he said, among other things, "will never consent to allow the workmen, through their unions or any other way, any voice whatsoever in the administration or control of production in our business. In the government which is to come there will be no coalition with the democratic parties—an all-Cadet ministry. . . ."

"How will this new government come into being? I will explain. The Bolsheviks threaten to make an insurrection on the twentieth of October. We are prepared. This uprising will be crushed by military force, and from this military force will come the new government. . . . Kornilov is not dead yet; he failed, but he still has enough support among the people to succeed. . . . And if the Bolsheviks do not rise, the propertied class will make a coup d'etat at the Constituent Assembly! No, we do not fear the Bolsheviks. They are cowards, and will run at the first few shots of the troops. They will be suppressed by the military. . . . There are the Cossacks several guard regiments and the junkers. That will be more than enough. . . . It is

my personal opinion that the republic will not last long in Russia. There will be a monarchy."

At the last meeting of the Council of the Russian Republic, I was wandering around the corridors, and chanced upon Professor Shatsky, a little, mean-faced, dapper man, who is influential in the councils of the Cadet party. I asked what he thought of the much-talked-of Bolshevik vis-tuplennie. He shrugged, sneering:

"They are cattle—canaille," he answered. "They will not dare, or if they dare they will soon be sent flying. From our point of view it will not be bad, for then they will ruin themselves and have no power in the Constituent Assembly. . . . But, my dear sir, allow me to outline to you my plan for a form of government to be submitted to the Constituent Assembly. You see, I am chairman of a commission appointed from this body, in conjunction with the government, to work out a constitutional project. We will have a legislative body of two chambers, much as you have in the United States. In the lower chamber will be territorial representatives, and in the upper, representatives of the liberal professions, Zemstvos, trades unions, co-operatives."

On October 16th a special commission of the Council of the Russian Republic and the Ministry hurriedly hammered out two projects for giving the land temporarily to the peasants and for pushing an energetic foreign policy of peace. "On the seventeenth Kerensky suspended the death penalty in the army. Too late. I went over to the Cirque Moderne to one of the Bolshevik meetings, which grew more and more numerous every day. The bare, gloomy wooden amphitheater, with its five tiny lights hanging from a thin wire, was packed from the ring up the steep sweep of grimy benches to the very roof—soldiers, sailors, workmen, women, listening as if their lives depended upon it, and roaring applause. A soldier was speaking—from the 548th Division, whatever and wherever that is:

"Comrades!" he cried, and there was real anguish in his drawn face and despairing gestures. "The people at the head of things are always appealing to us to sacrifice more, sacrifice more, while those who have everything are left unmolested. We are at war with Germany, and we wouldn't invite German Generals to serve on our staff. Well, we're at war with the capitalists, and yet we invite capitalists into our government. The soldier says, 'Show me what I am fighting for. Is it the Dardanelles, or is it free Russia? Is it the democracy, or is it the capitalists? If you can prove to me that I am fighting for the Revolution, then I'll go out and fight with capital punishment.'

"When the land is to the peasants, and the mills to the workers, and the power to the Soviets, then we'll know we have something to fight for and we'll fight for it!"

The Last Days.

Under date of October 16, I find entered in my notebook the following news culled from different newspapers:

Mogilev (Staff Headquarters).—Concentration here of Cossacks, the "Savage Division," several guard regiments, and the "Death Battalions"—for action against the Bolsheviks.

The Junker regiments from the officers' schools of Pavlovsk, Tsarkov, Selo, Peterhof, ordered by the gov-

(Continued on Page 7).