

# The Rise of a New Russian Autocracy

**R**ETURNING to the United States after an absence of nine months, I was amazed at the attitude of some of our large publications with respect to Russia. Kolchak, whom I have seen break up a democratic government in Siberia with the ruthlessness of a Tatar conqueror; who has suppressed free speech and free press; who has either jailed or exiled or murdered every member of the Russian Constituent Assembly upon whom he could lay his hands; and who has caused the opponents of his rule of the fist to be tortured and killed—Kolchak is represented to the American people as a disinterested person who is trying to establish democratic government in Russia!

And now comes word that the Council of Four at Paris has decided to supply Kolchak with money, provisions and ammunition, with a promise of recognition of his government, on the hypothesis that he will convene a Constituent Assembly as soon as he has taken Moscow! Moscow is, of course, a long, long way off from Kolchak. But that the hypothesis is none the less a dangerous one I hope to make clear from the acts of Kolchak himself.

How do I come to know these things, and what are my qualifications for estimating their importance?

I sailed from San Francisco for Vladivostok early in September, 1918. I was sent by the Committee on Public Information. For what purpose neither the Committee nor I really knew. In a general way it was felt that I might be useful in Siberia. I had organized the Russians in the United States for the memorable Fourth of July, 1918. I spoke Russian well, knew the peculiar psychology of the Russian mind, liked the Russians and felt with them. I was moreover familiar with the history of the Russian revolutionary movement and the minutiae of Russian socialist party politics. One of my recommendations was perhaps the fact that I considered Bolshevism—as I still consider it—an idealist's dream, an historical soap-bubble.

In Siberia I found an abundance of

work awaiting me. I was first loaned by the Committee on Public Information to the War Trade Board, for whom I took stock of the immense quantities of wealth that had accumulated in the port of Vladivostok during the last four years. I was next loaned to the American Red Cross, first to handle the now famous "Death Train" situation and its sequels, the epidemics of typhoid fever, typhus and dysentery; then to construct an anti-typhus train and fit out an anti-typhus expedition; next I did some literary work for the Committee, and was finally again loaned by them to the American Red Cross to accompany a shipload of invalided Czechoslovaks around India to Italy.

I thus had every opportunity to enter into the very heart of the Siberian situation.

My first glimpse of what the future held in store was on the way from Tsuruga, Japan, to Vladivostok.

Among the polyglot passengers who crowded the boat, I met a remarkable man—Voinoff. He was about 45, of medium stature, with light-gray, penetrating eyes, harsh features and long, blond hair. His costume was a mixture of the uniform of a French captain of infantry and the vestments of a Russian priest. I was told by passengers who had crossed the Pacific with him, that he had given such free expression to his hatred of America on the trans-Pacific steamer, as to get into a bad scrap with a group of American army officers. I became acquainted with him. We established ourselves in a corner among the lifeboats on the upper deck, where we talked uninterruptedly for many hours.

It was true that he detested America—an earthly, a vulgar, a despicable conglomeration of hybrids, with mob-rule for a government. America's boast of democracy—what did it amount to? The boast of a full pot of flesh and a full measure of beans!

"If I believed even for one moment that such degraded materialism was the destiny of the human race, I would jump overboard," he declar-