

The Truth About Russia

(From "The Workers' Dreadnought.")

By M. Phillips Price.

THUS two great social institutions have sprung up in revolutionary Russia—the political Soviet and the economic Soviet. The duty of the former is to protect the Republics from internal and external counter-revolution. The duty of the latter is to build up under the protection of the former the new social order. Once the danger of foreign intervention is removed, it is possible that in Russia the political Soviet will reduce its functions, and that the power in the land will pass to huge economic syndicates working under the control of the Central Council of Public Economy. The latter body is something like the Central All-Russia Professional Alliance, except that it concerns itself only with production, distribution and exchange on a public basis and has nothing to do with the internal affairs of the different industries, which belong to the syndicates. When the new social order is really guaranteed from foreign counter-revolution, the political conflicts which have been raging in Russia since the Revolution will gradually die down. The struggles between the Bolshevik theory of "Immediate World Revolution" and the Menshevik theory of "Labor Coalition with the Bourgeoisie" will give way to others. Then will arise the delicate problem of how to adjust the interests of the whole community to the claims of the different workers' industrial syndicates, so that private capitalists, conquered in the October Revolution, shall not reappear again in a more insidious form. All this, however, belongs to the future.

Russia has advanced by giant steps along the new road, in spite of all the wounds inflicted on her by the war and the foreign intervention. Young and energetic, untrammelled with the century-old conventions and traditions of an older, more archaic civilization, she has a clear field in which to begin the work of reconstruction. The private exploiter no longer exists in Russia today. If he was unwise, he fled to Paris and London to plot counter-revolution. If he was wise, he entered the service of Soviet Russia and is now receiving an ample salary, according to his knowledge and skill in industry. Throughout the length and breadth of the Russian plain, the struggle is still going on between those peasants whose ideals can not go beyond cornering corn and holding it up for famine prices while the towns are starving, and the proletarianized laboring peasants, who have learnt in the school of adversity that only by collective labor, by communistic production and distribution, can a new and juster society be created.

Soviet System Versus Democracy.

Everywhere in Russia now the organs of the new form of society are found in the two types of Soviet. Upon these political and industrial unions only those who labor by muscle and brain can elect and be elected. In order to obtain a vote, therefore, a man or woman must be organized in order to be thus organized one must do some form of productive work. This is the first essential of the Soviet system. The second essential is that the Soviet should be elected, not territorially, but industrially. This is the real difference between a Soviet State and a Democratic State. A Democratic State recognizes no economic divisions in the electorate: Everyone is regarded as a part of what is vaguely called "the people." How impracticable a democratic parliament is for the modern industrially specialized form of society, the following example may show. A metal worker, let us say, lives next to a railwayman, on one side, and an accountant on the other. All three have special economic interests for the understanding of which exact professional knowledge is required. Each of them, if he was to draw up a programme of his demands at a given moment would have different

claims to make for the protection of his particular economic interest. In a Soviet State each would have these interests put forward through the economic syndicate, of which he would have to be a member, and the central union of the syndicate would then consider them in relation to the whole economic production of the country. In times like the present, when the fight with the counter-revolution is still going on, the syndicate would have to consult with the political Soviet and obtain its sanction also. But the point is also, that the whole Soviet organization is so arranged that the economic apparatus which is able to represent the workers' special interests and can reconcile them with the interests of the whole community is at hand. In a democratic state exactly the reverse is the case, for here the workers' industrial organizations have no political power, and can only advise a body which is brought into being by a scattered electorate. Thus the three types of workers I take above are in a Democratic State only able to elect representatives for one district in which their economic interests are swamped in thousands of others. Candidates are put up by party caucuses which work on a territorial basis, and these candidates can not possibly represent all these interests at the same time. The Democratic election to a parliament, in fact, is nothing more than a device to deceive the workers by dividing them into artificial constituencies on the basis of which they can not possibly unite and draw up a common social and economic policy. This can only be done through the development of the industrial unions as described above.

Perhaps the greatest advantage of the Soviet, however, is that it is capable of being continually re-elected. The workers can withdraw their delegates and elect again at will. Thus the Soviets are always a reflection of the opinion of the workers at the given moment. This was most clearly seen in the case of the All-Russian Congress of Soviets in January, 1918, and the Russian Constituent Assembly, which met in that same month. The former, elected only a short time after the election for the Constituent Assembly, gave a large Bolshevik and Left Socialist-revolutionary majority. The Constituent Assembly, however, was elected on a candidate list made up in the Autumn of the previous year when quite different parties were in the political arena, and when the important split between the Left and the Right Wing of the Social-revolutionary party had not yet taken place. The result of the Constituent Assembly election was a majority for the Right Socialist Revolutionaries in which the Left Wing was hardly represented at all. For in the few weeks that elapsed between the drawing up of the list of candidates for the Constituent Assembly and the elections for it, an entirely new political situation had arisen. The Soviet Congress reflected this change, and the Constituent Assembly did not. Therefore, when the Allied Governments say that there must be in Russia a body which represents all the Russian people in a Constituent Assembly, before they can recognize the Russian Government, they are really saying that they want a government which will be put in power by scattering all the economic forces of the Russian workers, and which will become an empty shell within a short time of its election.

I would add one final word of appeal to the working class of England and France. Do not listen to the tales of horrors which the bourgeois press of Western Europe tells about the Russian Revolution. I say, because I know, that the starvation and misery from which the Russian people are suffering is due, not to those who are building up the new Socialist form of society, but to those who for three years drove Russia in an exhausting war, and then sent armed forces to invade her territory, and cut off her food supplies, and the raw materials of her industries. The Russian people appeal to all

Lenin---The Personal Leader ---Face to Face With His Followers

(From the September "Metropolitan.")

LENIN'S philosophy could not convince any American like Robins. Robins came back from Russia more anti-socialist than when he went. But he also came back knowing that Lenin's philosophy is indeed a philosophy and that it can not be countered by pretending that it is nothing but blood and wind. It challenges Americanism with a genuine challenge. It does not merely reject the basis of Americanism. It brings forward a strongly competitive basis of its own.

Lenin, of course, frankly, was not talking about consciences or about majorities. But neither was he talking about nothing. He was talking about vitalities, economic vitalities. He was saying:

The working-class is today the vital economic class in Russia. Through that class we will make a Russian Government better than the Czar's or Kerensky's, because it will be more vital, and better than any political government anywhere, because it will be economic. And this system, by example, will penetrate and saturate the world.

Such was Lenin in talk.

One day, back in Petrograd, when the Germans were advancing, Robins went out from his hotel to walk along the Nevsky Prospekt. He made toward the Neva. There was a crowd of people gathering there at a corner. Robins saw that they were reading a placard, spread on a dead wall, and that they were greatly excited by it. He joined them. This placard, in purport, said:

"Lenin has absconded to Finland with 30,000,000 roubles in gold from the State Bank. The Russian revolution has been betrayed by false leaders. But there is hope now for Holy Russia. The Little Father is coming back. The Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolaievitch is advancing from the Crimea with 200,000 brave true Russian soldiers who will save Russia from the Bolshevik traitors."

Robins turned and hurried back to his hotel to get his sleigh. He drove to Smolny, and waved his card at the door-keepers, and ran up stairs. In the corridors were crowds of commissioners and clerks and guards, running, shouting, and running again, getting ready for something very immediate. Machine-guns were being unhooded. Their cartridges were being run into them. The crowds, with the guns, surged over to one side of the building.

(Continued On Page Seven.)

the world for peace. They long to establish the normal economic exchange between East and West Europe which alone can make good the destruction of the four years' war. Raise the blockade, they say; send us the technical advisers without, which we can not restore our industries, shattered by the war. Soviet Russia is ready to pay handsomely for the services rendered. If the workers of England and France are still content to leave private financiers to control the relations between their countries and Russia, Soviet Russia will raise no objection but will treat with their financiers and satisfy their wants in so far as they do not involve the reduction of the Russian workers and peasants to the slavery that they lived in under Tsarism. If on the other hand English and French workers take these matters into their hands they will find in Bolshevik Russia a friend and an ally. They will at all times be welcome in the territories of the Republic, which are as safe for those engaged in honest labor as in any state of Western Europe or America. An immense field will be open to them to assist their Russian comrades with the technical advice which only they can give. On the other hand, they can learn many things which will be new to them in that wonder land that lies between Europe and Asia. Let us tear out the pages of the past! Let us write a new page in the history of the future!