

men by the promise of the immediate establishment of labour control in the factories. They forthwith created an armed force and ruthlessly applied coercion to their opponents. The Bolshevik idea of the triumph of the masses over their exploiters, over the bourgeoisie, spread like an epidemic through the land and for a time rendered futile every attempt at resistance. The Bolsheviks seized the opportunity, before the army had dispersed, to create a Praetorian guard of their own, and then, masters of the situation, proceeded to carry out their social experiments.

"The Bolsheviks carried out their promises. They did make a peace that placed the richest parts of Russia under the control of German Imperialists and created in the rest of Russia a state of perpetual civil war. But, at any rate, the army broke up finally and the soldiers drifted back to their homes. The Bolsheviks did proclaim the confiscation of private estates and of monastic and crown lands, but no system was devised for the partition of land among the peasantry. The result was an orgy of plunder and destruction in which the worst instincts of the peasantry found vent, but which brought them not the slightest economic relief. Indiscriminate land grabbing simply led to a strikingly unequal distribution of the land of private estates among the peasantry, and thence to further conflict between villages and individual peasants. The workmen were given control over the factories, or the factories were nationalized. But the workmen proved incapable of managing the factories they controlled or of inducing themselves or their comrades to work with any energy. And in spite of the enormous sums spent by the Bolshevik Government on subsidies for the payment of wages to workmen who toyed with their work, the factories closed down, one after another, and the workmen drifted into the streets. The store of manufactured goods swiftly declined, paper money became valueless, and there was practically nothing to give the peasants in exchange for their produce. Add to this the fact that communications were cut by civil war or German occupation, that transport, which had been overstrained by the war, had now sunk into a deplorable condition, and that the suggestion of anything like a normal circulation of goods sounded like bitter irony, and it becomes intelligible that the masses in a few months began to realize that the Bolshevik peace was considerably worse than war. The food shortage became appalling, and punitive expeditions were sent into the country to extort corn from the peasants.

"That is the material side. The system of rule is, in theory, a dictatorship of the proletariat exercised through central and local Soviets of workmen, soldiers and

peasants. The propertied classes are disfranchised, also the educated class in so far as its members do not accept the Bolshevik creed. But workmen, too, and peasants who elect non-Bolsheviks find themselves forcibly disfranchised. And, in fact, Bolshevik rule is a clumsy autocracy exercised by Lenin and Trotsky through the Red Guard or Red Army they formed during the period of the dissolution of the Regular Army. The Red Army, which is incapable of resistance to an organized and disciplined force, terrorizes the population, and serves as the instrument of a tyranny more immediately cruel, more openly unscrupulous, than any that the Ministers of the old régime could have conceived or exercised. That the Press is completely gagged, that liberty of action is a matter of purchase or evasion, that corruption runs riot, that justice is a legend, that human life has become almost as valueless as the rouble in an epidemic of murder and massacre—these are the cold facts of the Bolshevik rule, and their sinister significance is not mitigated by the fact that by skill, contrivance or sheer inertia it is possible under such conditions to exist, if not to live. And it speaks well for the fundamental humaneness and decency of the Russian people that, with all these powerful incitements to evil, the actual quantity of brutal excess has not attained far more astounding dimensions.

"Yet in the idea and intention of the leaders, at any rate of Lenin, the Bolshevik régime is a genuine experiment in Socialism. And the fact that this extraordinary man and some of his followers believe in it is the only power that gives such a bizarre and revolting system a show of credibility. It matters not to Lenin that, having yielded in the essentials of national existence to German dictatorship, he finds himself subjected to continual German pressure, that he is actually a pawn in the Germans' hands. He has known all along that his reign will be brief, but he is intent on making a Socialist experiment on such a scale and of such contagious power as to provoke a social revolution in the most advanced capitalist countries. Decrees are poured out, plans of industrial and political organization on communist lines are published in hundreds in the now bulky code of Soviet law. It matters nothing that in Russia they are so much waste paper, or that the attempts to apply them only increase the terrible anarchy and reduce the triumphant proletariat to prostration. The ideas, thinks Lenin, will gradually leaven the masses of Russia and perhaps bear fruit at some later date. But more important still, they will, in that strange excitement that emanates from the martyrdom of Russia, stimulate the awakening aspirations of the Western proletariat, and