

RED RUSSIA

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

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Mr. John Reid is the Russian Consul for New York State for the Russian People's Government.

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(Continued from last issue.)

Petrograd presented a curious spectacle in those days. In the factories the committee rooms filled with stacks of arms, couriers came and went, the Red Guard drilled. In all the barracks meetings every night and all day long interminable hot arguments. On the streets the crowds thickened toward gloomy evening, pouring in slow, voluble tides up and down the Nevski, bunched by the hundreds around some new proclamation pasted on a wall, and fighting for the newspapers. At Smolny there were new strict guards at the door, at both the gates and outer gates, demanding everybody's pass. Inside the committee rooms hummed and whirled all day and all night, hundreds of soldiers and armed workmen slept on the floor, wherever they could find room. Upstairs in the great hall which had been the ballroom of that one-time convent school for aristocratic girls, a thousand soldiers and workmen crowded for the uproarious all-night meetings of the Petrograd Soviet. From the thousand miles of battle front the twelve millions of men in Russia's armies, moved under the wind of revolt, with a noise like the sea rising, poured their hundreds upon hundreds of delegations into the capital, crying, "Peace! Peace!" There was a convention of the All-Russian Factory Shop Committees at Smolny, passing hot resolutions about the control of workers over industry. The peasants were coming in, denouncing the Central Committee of the Peasants' Soviets as traitors, and demanding that all power be given to the Soviets.

And in the city the theatres were all going, the Russian Ballet appearing in new and extravagant spectacles. Chaliapine singing at the Narodny Dom. Hundreds of gambling clubs functioned feverishly all night long, with much champagne flowing, stakes of 20,000 roubles. Private entertainments were given by the millionaire speculators, who were buying and selling for fabulous prices the food, the munitions, the clothing. On the Nevski every night thousands of prostitutes in jewels and expensive furs walked up and down crowded the cafes. Monarchist plots, German spying, smugglers, hatching schemes. And in the rain, the bitter chill, the great throbbing city under grey skies rushing faster and faster toward—what?

III.

Now while everybody was waiting for the Bolsheviks to appear suddenly on the streets one morning and begin to shoot down people with white collars on, the real insurrection took its way quite naturally and openly.

One of the recent blundering actions of the Provisional Government

had been to order the Petrograd garrison to the front, with the object of replacing it with loyal troops. To this order the Petrograd Soviet protested, alleging that it was the intention of the Government to remove from the revolutionary capital the revolutionary troops defending it. The General Staff insisted. Thereupon the Petrograd Soviet agreed in principle, at the same time stipulating that it be allowed to send a delegation to the front to confer with General-in-Chief Tcheremissov, and agree with him on the troops which were to come to Petrograd. The Petrograd garrison also appointed a delegation, but an order from the General Staff forbade the committee to leave the city. To the Soviet delegation General Tcheremissov insisted that the Petrograd garrison should obey his orders without question, and that the General Staff would send to Petrograd whatever troops it saw fit.

At the same time the Staff in command of the Petrograd District began quietly to act. The Junker artillery was drawn into the Winter Palace. Patrols of Cossacks made their appearance, the first since July, and great heavy armored motor cars mounted with machine guns began to lumber up and down the Nevski. The military section of the Petrograd Soviet demanded that a Soviet representative be admitted to the meetings of the Staff. Refused. Petrograd Soviet asked that no orders be issued without the approval of the military section. Refused. On the sixteenth the representatives of all the regiments of the Petrograd garrison held a meeting at Smolny, at which they formed the famous military revolutionary committee, and declared formally, "The Petrograd garrison no longer recognizes the Provisional Government. The Soviet is our government. We will obey only the orders of the Petrograd Soviet, through the Military Revolutionary Committee."

On the twenty-third, the Government announced that it had sufficient force to suppress any attempted rising. That night Kerensky ordered the suppression both of the extreme right papers, "Novaja Rus" and "Jivoe Slovo," and of the Bolshevik papers, "Rabotchi Poot" and "Soldat." An hour after the Junkers had closed the offices and printing shops, and put the Government seals on the doors, a company of soldiers from one of the Guard regiments broke the seals in the name of the Military Revolutionary Committee. At the same time other troops from Smolny seized the printing plant of the "Rousskaia Volia," a bourgeois paper, and began to print the "Rabotchi Poot." In trying to prevent this, Mayer, Chief of the Militia, was shot by the Red Guard.

During the night several transports full of Bolshevik sailors came

from Cronstadt, with the cruiser "Aurora." The Government ordered that the bridges over the Nova be raised, so that the regiments across the river and the workmen from the Viborg district could not come to aid the rebels. The Cronstadt sailors made a landing under fire, in which several people were killed, and closed the bridges. In the evening bands of Junkers stationed themselves at street corners near the Winter Palace and began to requisition automobiles and after some hours the Bolshevik troops began to do the same.

Working Class Assumes Power.

Tuesday morning, the 24th, the people of Petrograd awoke to find the city plastered with proclamations signed "Military Revolutionary Committee of the Petrograd Soviet of Workmen's and Soldiers' Delegates":

"To the population of Petrograd. Citizens! Counter-Revolution has raised its criminal head. The Kornilovtsi are mobilizing their forces in order to crush down the All-Russian Congress of the Soviets and break up the Convention of the Constituent. At the same time the pogromists may attempt to call upon the people of Petrograd for trouble and bloodshed. The Petrograd Soviet of Workmen's and Soldiers' Delegates takes upon itself the guarding of revolutionary order in the city against counter-revolutionary and pogrom attempts.

"The Petrograd garrison will not allow any violence or disorders. The population is invited to arrest hooligans and Black Hundred agitators and take them to the Soviet Commissars at the nearest barracks. At the first attempt of the dark forces to make trouble on the streets of Petrograd, whether robbery or fighting, the criminals will be rubbed away from the face of the earth!

"Citizens! We call upon you to maintain complete quiet and self-possession. The cause of order and revolution is in strong hands."

At Smolny that night meeting of the old Central Executive Committee of the All-Russian Soviets—its last—to welcome the delegates to the new Convention. Futile resolutions against the demonstration, in favor of complete submission to the Provisional Government. At the Council of the Republic, Kerensky thundered that the Government would suppress all uprisings mercilessly. At the Winter Palace heated conferences, expulsion of impotent Colonel Polkovnikov as Commander of Petrograd, appointment of a special committee, headed by Kishkine, to re-establish order. Call to the Junkers of Paxlovsk, of Tsarkoe, to come—and replies that they dare not, Bolshevik troops in the way. Calls to the Cossacks—who reply that they will not come out unless they are supported by infantry.

At midnight members of the Pavlovsk regiment, who have secreted themselves in the meeting room of the General Staff, overhear the plans that are being made to arrest the Bolshevik leaders, capture the Smolny and disperse the All-Russian convention. Immediately they post guards at all the entrances to the Staff, begin arresting officers and members of the Ministry, take them to Smolny—where no one knows what to do with them. Released with apologies. And then, two hours later, Junkers seizing the principal points of the city, the Military Revolutionary Committee gets into action. Ministers and Staff officers to be arrested, armored cars ordered out to hold the street corners. Bol-

shevik troops sent to seize the State Bank, the Telephone Station, drive the Junkers out of the Telegraph Station, and draw a cordon around the Winter Palace. But Kerensky has already fled.

The masses are in power. . . . And on the morning of October 31, after the defeat of Kerensky's Cossack army, Lenin and Trotsky sent through me to the revolutionary proletariat of the world this message:

"Comrades! Greeting from the first proletarian republic of the world. We call you to arms for the international social revolution."

RED RUSSIA

(By John Reid.)

Kerensky.

I.

October 23, 1917.

"I am a doomed man," said Alexander Kerensky from the tribune of the Council of the Russian Republic on October 13th, "and it doesn't matter what happens to me. . . ."

Doomed, indeed. Tuberculosis of the kidneys, of the lungs, and they say tumor of the stomach. Extremely emotional, strung to an almost hysterical pitch, the awful task of riding the Russian whirlwind is wearing him down visibly.

"Comrades!" he said at the Democratic Assembly, "if I speak to you like this, it is because the cross I carry, and which forces me to be far from you, is so terribly heavy!"

At the time of this writing, October 23, Kerensky is alone, as perhaps never leader has been alone in all history. In the midst of the class struggle, which deepens and grows bitterer day by day, his place becomes more and more precarious. Things are moving swiftly to a crisis, to the "lutte finale," between bourgeoisie and proletariat—which Kerensky tried with all his strength to avoid—and the "Moderates" disappear from the stormy scene. Kerensky alone remains, stubborn and solitary, holding his way.

The revolutionary democracy says that he has "sold out" to the bourgeoisie and the foreign imperialists. The bourgeoisie and the reactionary foreign influences—with the British Embassy at their head—accuse him of having "sold out" to the Germans. Upon him is concentrated the hatred of both sides, as upon a symbol of Russia torn in half. Kerensky will fall, and his fall will be the signal for civil war.

The familiar villifications are heaped upon him; he is everything from "traitor" to "corruptor of children." A common tale, reprinted weekly in the newspapers, is that of his separation from his wife, and approaching marriage with a well-known variety actress—or even that the actress is living in the Winter Palace. One of the former Ministers, whose apartment was next to Kerensky's, says that he was kept awake all night by the Premier singing operatic arias—and adds that Kerensky sleeps in the gold and blue bed of the Czar Alexander III, which is a very wide bed. . . . People repeat that Kerensky is surrounding himself with imperial pomp, and I have been told how, while speaking at the Moscow Conference, he kept two officers standing at salute until they fainted—a myth which has been exploded by every eye-witness. But the most widely-spread accusation is that "he is just trying to make a name for himself in history." And if that is Kerensky's fell design, he has succeeded.

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