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THE NEW RUSSIA

By

PAUL BIRUKOFF.

THE INDEPENDENT LABOUR PARTY,
and 9 Johnson's Court, Fleet Street, London, E.C. 4.

6d.

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FOREWORD.

By

Mrs. PHILIP SNOWDEN.

DURING a recent visit to Geneva I met Mr. Paul Birukoff in his own home. He had just returned from Moscow, whither he had been sent by the Swiss Red Cross in charge of four hundred Russian refugees who were being returned to their own country. His conversation about the present state of Russia was so interesting that it occurred to me that it would be very useful if his experience and knowledge of Russia could be made known in Great Britain. The fact that Mr. Birukoff is not a Bolshevist makes his impressions and statements all the more valuable.

The translation of Mr. Birukoff's manuscript has been made by Mr. Emile Burns, the Secretary of the I.L.P. Information Bureau, to whom I am very much indebted.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

On

PAUL BIRUKOFF.

Paul Birukoff, an intimate friend and biographer of Leo Tolstoi, was born in 1860 at Kostroma in Russia. He studied first with the Corps of Pages, then at the School of Imperial Marine, and later, after a cruise in the Mediterranean, went to the Marine Academy.

Feeling no vocation for a military career, he transferred his services to the Academy of Sciences, taking a post at the Central Observatory of Petrograd. The social and moral ideas which were then current in high society in Russia attracted him greatly, and he soon abandoned his scientific career and took to popular propaganda for Christian and democratic ideals. He was one of the founders of the publishing house, Posrednich, which soon became the principal medium of propaganda for Tolstoi's ideas. Becoming acquainted with Leo Tolstoi, Paul Birukoff soon became one of his intimate friends, and later an interpreter of his ideals. In 1897 he took an active part in the anti-militarist movement of the Doukhobortsi, as a result of which he was exiled and deported to the Baltic Provinces near Mitau, where he had to spend a year under close police supervision. After that he was allowed to go abroad, and went first to England, then made a journey to Cyprus to establish there a colony of the Doukhobortsi, and finally settled in Switzerland

near Geneva. After the Russian Revolution of 1905 he was able to return to Russia, but as he found his activities hampered by the last reactionary Czarist Government, he left Russia again and returned to Switzerland in 1912, and, believing that he would have to settle there for ever, he was naturalised and became a citizen of Geneva. But at the end of the world war in November, 1918, being anxious to renew his literary relations with Russia, he took an engagement with the Swiss Red Cross, conducted a number of Russian emigrants from Switzerland to Moscow, and after a stay of three months in Moscow, returned to Geneva with the last train load of Swiss subjects in March, 1919. In the brief account which follows he gives an impartial account of his impressions of his former Fatherland. His main literary works are:

(1) *Tolstoi's Life.* A biography in four volumes (two volumes already published, the third in the press, and the fourth in preparation. This has been translated into all European languages).

(2) The French edition of Tolstoi's complete works, with preface and notes.

(3) Edition, with notes, of *Leo Tolstoi's Journal.*

(4) A large number of articles on the Tolstoian Movement in Russia, published in various papers and reviews.

THE NEW RUSSIA.

In dealing with such a living and thrilling subject I have first of all to tell you within what limits I shall speak. It may be that these limits will disappoint you. You must understand at once that I have nothing sensational to tell you. I have not come here to hurl thunderbolts against the Bolsheviks, who are used nowadays much as bugbears are used to frighten children. And again I am sorry not to be able to please those who came here to hear a Bolshevik, because I am not one, in spite of the rumours which have been put about.

I am speaking because I wish to let the truth be known, for the truth is dear to me. My noble master and friend, Leo Tolstoi, used to repeat a Russian proverb which ran something like this: "It is as undignified for an old man to lie as for a rich man to steal." Therefore my white hairs will compel me to tell the truth.

The New Russia. Does it exist or does it not? Yes. It does exist. It is shaping itself and rising from the chaos into which it had been plunged by the downfall of Czarism, by the war and the Revolution. But it is such an enormous and complicated subject, one so full of contradictions, that it is impossible to deal with it fully in a speech. It would need years of study and volumes of description to deal with it adequately. I have only been on a journey from Geneva to Moscow and back again during last winter. I stayed about three months in Moscow, and I must ask you to allow me to give you as exactly as possible the impressions I formed during that time. Do not expect me to give you scientific statements and do not be disappointed if my impressions are not the same as yours. I had the good fortune to be a Russian,

that is to say, to be able to understand the psychology of the people, the psychology of the time and the psychology of the movements which are now in progress within the heart of this great nation. And this *a priori* knowledge enabled me to keep my mind clear in spite of the pack of lies that the Press put about as to the condition and fate of present-day Russia. I was able quietly to digest the facts which came to my knowledge and to appreciate the degree of truth in news described as "authentic."

THE CAMPAIGN OF LIES.

I have neither the time nor the wish to analyse and deny all the lies that have been heaped up about the present system in Russia. I shall merely take one or two examples and leave you to draw your own conclusions as to the rest.

Since Lenin appeared on the political stage he has been described as "in German pay." The basis for this was that he preached what is known as "Defeatism." Now there is no doubt that the Germans might have been able to derive advantage from this propaganda, but that was in no way Lenin's fault. His line of argument was perfectly correct, and it was based on the history of Russia. Looking at Russian history during the nineteenth century the student observes that every victorious war was followed by reaction, and every war in which Russia was defeated was followed by progress. The logical conclusion for any person who desired progress for his country was to hope that it would be defeated. This is what Lenin did. And in fact this historical law has once again been proved in the Russian defeat and in the Entente victory. However, the Brest-Litovsk Peace made Lenin be once more described as "in German pay"

—quite unjustifiably, because there was no other alternative than this peace open to Russia at that time, as her army had demobilised itself of its own accord. The next stage was the publication in America of authentic documents (although the so-called documents were only photographs) which showed beyond the possibility of doubt that Lenin had received German money. But this little mountain of lies tumbled down when Scheidemann, one of the supposed signatories to these authentic documents, publicly denied the authenticity of his signature.

There is one other subject of which I am well qualified to speak, and that is the Tolstoian Movement in Russia. There again a little mountain of lies has been built up. We were told in the Press that Tolstoi's home had been pillaged, and in spite of the formal denial by Tolstoi's Secretary, which I published, this lie was repeated again and again, and it was added to by the story of the destruction of Tolstoi's tomb. Well, a few months later I went myself to Jasnaia Poliana and spent a few days in the hospitable house now inhabited by the widowed Countess, and I visited the tomb and found it intact in its imposing simplicity, just as I had left it five years before.

We have all probably heard the lie about the socialisation of women, which on investigation proved to be based merely on a ridiculous manifesto of an anarchist group in the provinces; a manifesto which attracted so little notice in Russia that during my stay there last winter I never heard the subject even mentioned.

You can see from these examples what credit is to be placed in the news which appears in the European Press. It may be that terrible crimes have been committed by the Russian authorities; but they are certainly not guilty of the crimes of which they are accused by the Press. It was such considerations as these which gave me courage

to go and take part in the new life which is being built up in Russia.

THE SOCIAL PYRAMID REVERSED.

The reforms have been radical. Before the 1905 Revolution a print used to be in circulation in revolutionary Russian circles representing the social pyramid. At the top of the pyramid was the Czar, being blessed by the Holy Spirit descending from Heaven. On the next stage were his ministers. After these came the intellectuals and the scholars, the bureaucrats, the artists, and then the merchants and business people. At the very bottom were the workers with bent backs supporting the whole weight of this social pyramid. The Revolution has turned this pyramid upside down. The classes which had been at the bottom straightened their backs and took into their hands the Government of the Russian State, and their rule is called the dictatorship of the proletariat. This complete reversal of things took place with comparative ease. There was very little resistance. The bourgeois class in Russia is estimated at ten per cent., or even less, of the population. It was quite unable to make any resistance, and as a matter of fact there was no "class war." All the incidents in which bloodshed occurred were the result of struggles between the political parties which were aiming at appropriating to themselves the power which the Communists had seized.

The working class thus summoned to the Government of the country was not ready for this most difficult task. The whole giant mechanism of a State comprising 180,000,000 of people stood still for lack of food and for lack of trained mechanics who might have kept it going.

One section of the intellectuals, engineers, professors, doctors, artists, men of letters, all belonging to other political parties, feeling themselves no longer to take an

active part in the struggle, went abroad or into the distant provinces, where opposition to the existing Government was concentrating. Their empty places had to be filled by newcomers, and these newcomers were not equal to the difficulties of their position. Hence errors were committed, and signs of the temporary disorganisation of the great social organism became evident. But there was even worse to happen. The far-reaching ramifications of the new administrative mechanism suffered severely. The people in the provinces and in the country were at first hardly conscious of the nature of their new task, and it was with great difficulty that the personnel necessary to fill the vacant positions was found. But it was absolutely essential to set the machine going, and so the first comers had to be taken, although they were sometimes ex-convicts who brought discredit on their position.

THE TAMING OF THE BEAST.

Meanwhile the counter-revolution was not asleep. Plots more or less well organised threatened the new regime, which resorted to the weapon of the Terror in self-defence. As a result of all the imperfections to which I have just alluded, the Terror in many cases took the form of murder and confused pillage in which innocent victims suffered. But this unhappy period has gone by.

The Red Terror was cruel, but not more cruel than the White Terror. Everywhere that the counter-revolution was triumphant, unheard of cruelties were perpetrated. Every government which is in course of setting up a new regime acts by terror, and liberal reforms come only when the people begin to get accustomed to being afraid. It is in just the same way that savage beasts are made gentle and docile, tamed by the red steel. The tamer is then able to embrace them in the

cage, and the public is astonished at the friendly relations between man and lion.

Before my departure from Moscow I read in a Soviet journal an article headed "The End of the Terror." In this article the author declared that the Russian Revolution was entering into its second period—a period of organisation, of work, of legislation—as the Revolutionary Government had now become so strong that it need no longer rely on those extraordinary measures which had been inevitable at the beginning. The beast had been tamed. I may add that during my stay in Moscow I went out day and night into the streets of the capital and never met with the least interference.

THE STRENGTH OF THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT.

We often read in the Press articles headed "The End of Bolshevism," "The Dying Struggles of the present regime in Russia," and so on. These articles have appeared from time to time during the whole period of nearly two years that this regime has been in existence, and yet in spite of these articles the Soviet Government is still alive and is growing stronger.

What then is the reason for its survival? We must first ask, why did it first succeed? The present Government overthrew the preceding Government at the moment of greatest chaos, resulting from the dethronement of the Czar, military defeat, the realisation by the people that their hopes had been disappointed, and the general misery caused by the protracted war. Demobilisation, or rather the dispersal of the army of its own accord, increased the disorder. The present Government, by its decrees, gave legal sanction to two of the people's aspirations—its desire for peace and its desire for land—and by doing this it won the people's confidence.

THE LAND FOR THE PEOPLE

The agrarian question had been raised during the Kerensky regime, but no solution had been found. That was the period of the greatest chaos and disorder, when the peasants, excited by Social Revolutionary agitators, pillaged the property of the landowners. Lenin's Government sanctioned the expropriation of land for the benefit of the people, and by this measure took upon itself the responsibility for pillages of which it had in no way been guilty. It is true that agrarian reform has not yet been finally settled. Land is divided out amongst the peasants, but the forms of possession, the conditions of use and development have not yet been determined.

The requisition by the people of the landed estates took place in many different ways. I knew well a great landowner, Prince Koudacheff, who was a revolutionary, and had been exiled in the time of the Czar. Set free by the Revolution, he returned to his estate, and calling together a meeting of the peasants who leased his land, he told them that, being a socialist, he could no longer recognise private property in land. He therefore gave the land to the peasants and suggested to them that they should organise themselves into a co-operative society to develop the land and the farm. The society was formed, and the former owner was elected president. He thus remains upon his estate, not as possessor-oppressor, but as a friend of the people. And I know of many similar cases in Russia. If, however, the landowner was not willing to give up his property he was warned that he must abandon it. If he was a landlord living on good terms with the people his private fortune was spared, he was allowed time to sell off his movable property, cattle and so forth, on good terms; he was given grain and other provisions, and then he was asked to go away. Those, however, who were known as exploiters of the

people were ordered to leave immediately, and were allowed to take away nothing, being compelled to look for work elsewhere. In many cases there were families in which a division of opinion took place. The obstinate "possessors" were compelled to quit, but the younger generation, won over to the new ideas, were allowed to remain and to enter into friendly relations with the people.

ORGANISING COMMUNISM.

The political party now in power is called the Communist Party. Its aim is to introduce State Communism, not at all an easy task in a country of at least a hundred million people, the majority of whom are still illiterate. For this reason the Government first aimed at establishing model communist organisations, and gave these favourable opportunities for developing, with the aim of attracting the people towards them. This plan, however, has met with only partial success. Alongside of these official organisations there are a certain number of voluntary communist organisations, held together by moral and religious bonds, which are recognised by the State and given equally favourable chances for development. Some of these communes have grown considerably, such as, for example, the Commune of Abstainers, which lately sent an appeal to the Allies asking them to put an end to the Blockade and to stop armed intervention in Russia —that new war which in my opinion is doing irreparable harm to the Russian people. This appeal was published some time ago in the Swiss papers.

Apart from these Communist organisations the Co-operative movement contains the largest number of groupings in present-day Russia. There are a great many of these Co-operative organisations, both of consumers and of producers, and their machinery is of great value

for the feeding of the population. Another kind of group is that of the Trade Unions, which organise the placing of employees in different industries, domestic service, as well as the other kinds of employment.

TENANTS' COMMITTEES.

Another most interesting group is that of the Tenants' Committees. Houses are nationalised. The General Assembly of Tenants elects a committee, a president and secretary. The committee concerns itself with all matters relating to tenants, and serves as a medium of communication between the local authorities and the people. The Committee distributes the food cards, and informs the people of the orders issued by the authorities. These organisations have contributed a great deal to unifying the interests of the individual citizens, and have made the feeding of the people much easier and have solved the question of housing. Independent life became more and more difficult in circumstances which almost compel collective living. Life in general is full of energy, and I shall attempt to sketch some of the aspects of this creative life which is working at the regeneration of the country.

EDUCATION.

Public education is under the control of the Commissary, Lounacharsky, a brilliant and learned man, full of energy and devotion for the cause. The Czarist regime left a legacy to the present system of a population in which more than sixty per cent. were illiterate. In order to enable the whole population to gain education, it was necessary at once to triple the number of schools. That is a task which takes time, but it is going on with a fine

enthusiasm. The programme of one single type of school has been introduced. Teaching is free, both at the school and at the University.

The education of adults who have passed school age and are still illiterate is a most important question in Russia, and therefore a special department for education outside the school system has been set up at the Commissariat of Public Education. Lenin's wife is at the head of this department.

MADAME LENIN. THE WORK SCHOOL.

To give you an idea of the intelligence of this remarkable person I shall quote a few passages from her book, which she gave me with her own hands. She is a sweet and lovable person, though far from strong, and yet in spite of this, her energy is unequalled. One of her aims is to introduce manual work into the modern Russian school system by setting up Work Schools, and she writes:—

"The Work School should have as its basic principle the combination of manual with intellectual work. Manual work in the Work School must not be specialised; on the contrary, it must be as diversified as possible. The child must model, design, paint, cut out, paste on, do carpentering, and so on. Manual work must be closely allied with the teaching of mathematics, natural science, geography and history. It gives life to these branches of study, brings them nearer to the child, and thus makes them more intelligible. It awakens in the child interest in these studies, and teaches it to observe and to work out things for itself. In this way manual work brings out the creative impulses in the child, develops the habit of perseverance until the end is attained, awakens interest in technical work, and

gives the child the general idea of what work is. In such surroundings as the Work School gives it, the child's bent and natural aptitudes are readily brought out."

SOLIDARITY THROUGH EDUCATION.

A little later, dealing with the school of the future in terms at once more general and more definite, she writes:—

"The school of the future must do everything possible to develop the sentiment of solidarity between the children. Every kind of restraint must be rigidly excluded. The school of the future must be, so to speak, a free association of pupils whose aim it is, by their common efforts, to clear the path which leads to the realms of thought. The teacher in such a school is no more than a beloved comrade who helps his pupils by his greater experience and knowledge, who shows them the practical ways in which knowledge may be acquired, helps them to organise useful work together, and teaches them how to help one another in the process of education. Only a school run on these lines can become a school of solidarity, a school which teaches mutual understanding and confidence. But the desire to be useful to men is not enough by itself. It is also necessary to know how to be useful. Schools at the present time make children unaccustomed to being useful. The child wishes to apply his knowledge as soon as he acquires it, and the school artificially prevents him from doing so. He is kept on dictation and useless problems, and the consolation offered is that after ending his studies and receiving a certificate he may perhaps be able to be useful to his relatives

and to Society. But anyone with any knowledge of children realises that, especially in the higher forms, this compulsory idleness is a real torment to them, and they suffer because the most natural of their instincts, the desire to be useful to other people, remains unrecognised. The schools of to-day artificially develop their ignorance of how to apply their energy and render it productive. At the completion of his studies a boy who has been to college looks everywhere without success for some work in which he might be useful to mankind, and he does not see the humdrum daily work, which is just as necessary, because he does not know how to apply himself to it.''

SELF-GOVERNMENT IN THE SCHOOL.

The principle of self-government has also been introduced in the new schools, and Mme. Lenin shares on this subject the views of those American teachers, who believe in the greatest possible freedom for the development of their pupils' social instincts. She writes:—

> ''Those who believe in a liberal education are resolutely opposed to scholastic discipline and constraint in any form, whether physical or moral, in the sphere of education. This must be the very basis of a liberal education, and it is an axiom which there is no need to prove. Once constraint has been done away with, measures of police supervision at once become futile, and such posts as 'prefects' (so harmful to the youthful mind), chosen in some schools from among the pupils, can be abolished. Having got rid of this mockery of self-government, we are able at once to substitute the principle of participation by all the children in the organisation of the school and of the teaching given there.''

BOURGEOIS BUREAUCRACY.

Lastly, I quote below a part of Mme. Lenin's political creed. Speaking of the organisation of the Commissariat of Public Education, she says:—

> "It would be both ridiculous and disastrous if the proletariat which had won power set up organisations of the same type as the bureaucratic institutions of the bourgeoisie. The proletariat has most certainly not taken power into its own hands merely to transform itself into the dominant class of oppressors, but rather to abolish every kind of exploitation, domination and oppression. Because this is so, it needs organisations which are far different from those which the bourgeoisie needed. It must not follow the example given by the bourgeoisie, but rather the example of the revolutionary proletariat in progressive countries, such as the Parisian Proletariat which overthrew the former system and set up the Paris Commune."

I may add that Mme. Lenin's articles are signed with the pseudonym, "Kroupsky."

ART, MUSIC, AND THE THEATRE.

Art is taught in special schools. Painting is taught in a number of special schools; Applied Art is one of the most favoured studies. The conservatoires of music carry on as before, and most of the professors have remained at their posts. There are many theatres, and they are always full. The repertory is much the same as before, except that distinctively patriotic pieces are no longer played. The works of Ibsen, Maeterlinck, Tolstoi, Tchekoff, and other masters are frequently produced.

There are also many popular concerts, and scientific and political conferences of all kinds. One excellent means of education, apart from the schools, is given by what are called "The People's Houses." Many of the former houses of landowners have been changed into these institutions. In a great many villages Associations of Culture and Education have been set up, whose function it is to arrange for theatrical productions, libraries, conferences and meetings for popular entertainment of various kinds.

INDUSTRIAL CHANGES.

It is true that industry has suffered very severely, but it has never ceased to develop under the new regime. All factories are nationalised and administered by Councils of Workers, but the specially technical side is of necessity entrusted to engineers and specialists, who are often the same as under the preceding system. In some cases the expropriated directors have become salaried managers. I know one great printing establishment at Moscow at which two thousand workmen are employed. The Workers' Council took control of it, but the concern was not going well. Delegates were, therefore, sent to the former director, and he was asked to help them. He accepted on certain conditions, and now he is once again at the head of the business, which is making wonderful progress. The initiative of the workers, now that it has been set free from the yoke of capitalist exploitation, is making admirable progress. People who have first-hand knowledge have told me that the metal industry especially has made immense strides. A group of metal workers has invented and developed for use a new and ingenious process for steel implements. But industry in general, it is perfectly true, has to over-

come the very serious obstacle to its development, occasioned by the lack of fuel and raw materials. The iron mines of the Ural district are cut off by Koltchak, and cotton for the textile industry is only obtainable with the greatest difficulty from Central Asia. But it is difficult and most disheartening to tell you of all the harm that is being done throughout the country by the senseless Allied Blockade.

THE ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES.

The economic situation is an extremely difficult one. Russia is great and rich in products of all kinds, but innumerable obstacles prevent the exchange and distribution among the population of these various products. In the first place, there is the dislocation of transport caused by the shortage of locomotives—which cannot even be repaired in consequence of the lack of any spare parts, resulting from the Blockade. There is a shortage of fuel; petrol is held up by the British (the Baku oil wells); and coal is held up by Denikin, who is supported by the Entente. The only fuel obtainable in the winter was wood, which was extremely dear. A load of blocks equal to about two cubic yards cost 400 to 500 roubles* Many factories were compelled to close down in consequence of the lack of raw materials and fuel. As the result of this the people lack such absolutely essential things as linen clothing, boots, soap, etc. The shortage of these things is especially noticeable in the country. Peasants who have wheat and other farm produce are always glad to exchange it for industrial products, but these are not easily come by.

***The pre-war rate of exchange was about 10 roubles to the £. At present any translation into terms of English currency is almost meaningless.**

Money has gone down in value ten or twentyfold, and prices and wages have gone up in the same proportion. But there are even more exorbitant prices charged in the "free markets," where things can be obtained without cards at enormous prices. A pood of wheat (36-lbs.) cost in January, 1919, six hundred roubles. But the price of provisions distributed under the card system was moderate.

There were cards of three kinds. In the first category were included productive workers and all workers who were registered in Trade Unions. They received one pound of bread a day. The second category included intellectual workers and officials, who are entitled to three-quarters of a pound of bread per day; and in the third category are professional people, who receive half a pound of bread per day. Other provisions are distributed according as circumstances permit.

Wages have been fixed by the State; the minimum for a labourer is 600 roubles a month, and the maximum for a skilled worker is 1,000 roubles a month. The People's Commissaries (that is, the ministers) receive 1,300 roubles a month.

I am not able to give information on a good many subjects which I am sure would be of the greatest interest to the public, because I did not have time enough to make a close study of the situation in that enormous country.

THE ATTITUDE OF THE PEASANTS.

In the country districts the peasants are not yet communists. They have a traditional collectivist tendency in the working of common lands under the system of the *Mir*, a kind of village moot; but that system is, however, far removed from communism. This is the source of

the continuous struggle between the Government and the peasants.

The Russian peasants are as a rule conservative and do not trouble themselves much about the forms of government. A good many fables have been told about the peasants' love for the Little Father, the Czar. We have seen in our own experience that the downfall of the Czar aroused no protest from them. As we said above, the present Government had won the confidence of the peasants by issuing decrees giving them peace and land. The renewal of the war which has been forced upon the Government, and the subsequent mobilisation, have done a good deal to make the people lose confidence in the new Government. But it has no thought at all of overthrowing this Government. The revolts of the peasants which took place during last winter were fermented by revolutionary agitators, belonging to the parties opposed to the Government. But these revolts, serious though they were, were put down without difficulty.

The Government distinguished three classes of peasants, the poor, the moderately well-to-do and the rich. At first it tried to base its support on the poor element, but the attempt was not successful. The poor element, the proletariat, is not held in great esteem in the country. In order to live decently a peasant must have land, a house, a wagon, cattle and implements, etc. The peasant who possesses these things is not poor, and the peasant who does not possess them is no longer a peasant, and therefore loses all influence in his village.

This is the real reason why the Poverty Committees, organisations of the Proletariat, were not successful. They were formed from transitory elements which were quite unable to exercise any authority in the villages. Recognising this, the Government has abandoned that experiment and has made up its mind to look for support

from the moderately well-to-do element, which, beyond doubt, is the largest. The Poverty Committees have been dissolved, and new Soviets have been formed.

The richer elements among the peasants are opposed to the Government, but they are in exactly the same measure enemies of the people, oppressors of the people; they and the small bourgeoisie of the towns were the strongest supporters of the Czarism, and it is from these elements that the Party of the "Black Hundreds" was recruited.

They are the people who are now engineering discontent with the authorities and who are the breeding ground for plots. They are also the people who suffer most when repressive measures are taken, and who have to pay extraordinary taxes and other imposts.

WHY THE PEASANTS ARE DISCONTENTED.

There are two other serious points of disagreement between the peasant and the Government. The first is the requisition of wheat. There is no country in the world where the peasant is willing to give up freely the product of his labour. Everywhere only constraint can force him to do that. Where laws are recognised by the population, this is done under the pretext of a voluntary contribution, but in Russia the revolutionary system is in a chaotic state, and compulsion appears in a more visible form.

The requisition of wheat commenced long ago during the war, under the regime of the Czar, and it has never ceased since. The State has fixed prices. It was impossible and imprudent to requisition the whole of the wheat crop. The balance, what was left over, could be sold at higher prices than those given by the State, and this was the source of increasing discontent and continual

ill-feeling, a good breeding ground for all kinds of revolutionary disorders.

The second point of disagreement is mobilisation. The people never desired war. The ordinary mechanism of a great army dragged them into it in spite of themselves, but now this mechanism has been destroyed and the prestige of necessity has gone. The new Government solemnly proclaimed the end of the war, and set its blessing upon demobilisation. The people were in full agreement, and now for reasons not understood by them mobilisation has begun again. The people refused to believe it, but detachments of the Red Army scour the country, search out and arrest deserters, and execute those who refuse to join the army. This is one more point of ill-feeling and discontent, and is likely to prolong the present troubles.

But the disturbances have been repressed, and by far the greatest mass of the people has submitted to the new yoke. This passive mass is not an obstacle to the Government, but on the other hand it does not actively help it. In order to get the new system deep-rooted in the people, the Government needs conscious elements which can carry out propaganda in words and in deeds. It is possible that this support may come from an unexpected direction, from the spiritual, moral and religious movements whose growth has never been checked within the hearts of the Russian people.

THE RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS.

Among these movements the most powerful is the Tolstoian. Communist Marxism is the basis of the policy of the Russian Communist Party, and it is a non-moral doctrine. Individual consciousness of right and the understanding of scientific truth are not enough to

rouse peoples. They need an ideal outside their daily life, which they feel is always full of compromise.

Hence the void which Communist doctrine cannot fill produces a spiritual thirst which they cannot quench; and the political pamphlets spread broadcast by the Party in power are not enough to satisfy the people. It is all very well to wave flags on which are written the great words, Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, Justice, and so forth. The people knew too well that they have been carved on the buildings of a neighbouring republic, and that they failed to lead the nation towards a moral end.

Now, therefore, the people are turning towards the man who has been for a long time looked up to as expressing the consciousness of humanity—Leo Tolstoi. What a deep antagonism between the doctrine of love and non-resistance and the doctrine of violence and terror and dictatorship! And yet Tolstoism plays a leading part in Russia to-day, and the dictators tolerate the followers of the great apostle, and even given them a certain preferential treatment as compared with the members of other parties and movements. What is the reason? It is quite a simple one. The political party now in power is much disturbed by the struggles of the other political parties which desire to overthrow it and to take its place. The Tolstoians are not a danger in this sense, because a sincere Tolstoian could never accept a responsible position in a State based on violence; and, in fact, the Tolstoians have no desire to seize power from those who now hold it. It is to this political disinterestedness that the Tolstoians owe their relative liberty.

But there is an even deeper cause which allows the followers of the great apostle to pursue their activities without hindrance. The purity of his ideal and his whole life work, directed as it was for the good of the working classes; his severe criticism of the idle possessing classes;

his true forecast of the world catastrophe; his impartial judgment in social questions, and his fervent belief in the coming of the Kingdom of Love and Friendship—all this has won him such respect and has drawn towards him such a compact mass of the Russian people, or rather, I might say, of the peoples who inhabit Russia, that a Socialist Government could never oppose the active propagation of his ideas.

Apart from the powerful Tolstoian Movement, there are parallel religious groups, acting independently, which have come under the saving influence of Tolstoian ideas in so far as the immediate application of Social Christtianity is concerned. To name a few of these, there are the old Russian Protestants, the Stoundists, the Baptists, the Adventists, the Evangelists, the Doukhobortsi, the Malevantzi, and many others. All these religious groups are united on the most important question in social life at present, compulsory military service. Those who belong to these groups regard military service as incompatible with their religious beliefs, and refuse to respond to the military summons.

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS.

Under the Czarist regime they had to put up with more or less severe persecutions which sometimes meant fifteen years hard labour. During the last war about a thousand refusals to undertake military service, on religious grounds, were registered by the authorities. The Revolution set them free from prison, and in its earlier period they enjoyed complete liberty. But now once again a new summons to arms, to defend the Revolution from the attacks of reactionary Europe, brought them again into danger of persecution.

A special Council of delegates from many religious

groups was therefore set up under the Chairmanship of Vladimir Thertkoff, an intimate friend of Tolstoi. This Council sent a formal request to the Government asking for freedom from compulsory military service on religious grounds. Lenin, the head of the Government, declared in answer to this appeal, that the Socialist Government, which in principle was itself anti-militarist, could not persecute those who refused military service on conscientious grounds, and the Central Soviet of Moscow issued the following decree:—

Decree of the Soviet of Commissaries of the People, dated 4th January, 1919.

Freedom from Military Service on the ground of religious convictions.

(1) People who on account of their religious convictions are unable to undertake military service are obliged, in accordance with the decrees of the National Tribunal, to substitute for it an equal term of service to their fellow creatures by such service as work in hospitals for contagious diseases, or some other work of public utility to be chosen by the individual concerned.

(2) The National Tribunal in deciding questions as to the substitution of civil work for military service is to be assisted by "The Joint Council of Religious Groups and Communes of Moscow," for each individual case; the Joint Council to report as to whether the religious conviction concerned makes military service impossible, as well as on the sincerity and honesty of the applicant.

(3) In exceptional cases the Joint Council of Religious Groups and Communes may have recourse to the All Russian Central Executive Committee, with a view to securing complete freedom from

service, without the substitution of any other service, if it can be shown that such substitution is incompatible with religious convictions; the proof to be taken from writings on the question and also from the personal life of the individual concerned.

NOTE.—Steps to secure freedom from service may be initiated by the individual concerned or by the Joint Council, and the latter can require the case to be tried by the National Tribunal of Moscow.

Signed, President of the Soviet of Commissaries: LENIN.
Commissary of Justice: KOURSKY.
Chancellor of State: BONTCH-BROUEVITCH.
Secretary: FOTIEVA.

Dated from the Kremlin, Moscow, January 4th, 1919.

THE ATTACK ON THE CAPITALIST SYSTEM.

The battle has been opened on the whole length of the front. Capitalism and private property are in danger. Communist Socialism is developing its attack in strength and now for nearly two years has held in its hands the destinies of many nations. Are we to side with one party or with the other? We can side with neither. The Christian law which we profess prevents us from entering into the ranks of combatants who use violence and cruelty against their enemies. We are living at an exceptional period, at the turning of the ways. The world perhaps has never known such complete reversals of its habits of life. But nevertheless we can find in the history of humanity periods when similar questions were claiming solution, though perhaps on a lesser scale; times when perhaps they have even been solved; and we may therefore be able to follow the example of those who have found the pacifist solution in the midst of bloody struggles.

Let us turn to the example of the war of secession in the United States of North America. The two parties were almost equal in strength, and the struggle was bitter. In the midst of this bloody struggle, a society of non-resisters arose, headed by Lloyd Garrison, who declared that they were in full agreement with the highest aims of the combatants, but could not have recourse to arms, because their convictions prevented them from taking the life of any person whatever, and ordered them to love their enemies and pardon those who did evil to them. This society won numerous adherents and did a great deal to make the struggle less bitter, and contributed to the final victory and pacification of the country.

In Bohemia in the Middle Ages a Communist Movement grew up among the disciples of Jean Huss, who was burnt alive by the Pope at the Council of Constance in 1415. The Hussite Communists withdrew to Mount Tabor, near Prague, and took the name of Taborites. It seemed as if the movement was likely to develop. Then the Catholic troops, commanded by the Emperor Sigismond, marched against them to crush out the movement. The Holy Father preached a Crusade. The Taborites weakened in their faith. They took up arms and defended themselves heroically against the imperial troops. The movement became a popular one. The struggle extended, and the Hussite Wars, as history has come to call them, lasted thirteen years. The Imperial Party in the end proved stronger, and the disciples of Jean Huss were absolutely exterminated.

But a group of these disciples, headed by Pierre Cheltchitsky, had refused to take part in the struggle, remaining faithful to the Christian principles. When the struggle came to an end the people of Bohemia and Moravia recognised them as liberators, their faith spread

abroad, and the country became covered with Communist Organisations of Moravian Brothers who marked the most flourishing epoch in the history of the Slav peoples. I believe that a similar role is marked out in the present day for the Tolstoian movement.

THE TOLSTOIAN ATTITUDE.

We believe that Communism is a very high form of social order, but we cannot approve of the use of constraint in imposing it upon the people. Nevertheless we look upon the Communist institutions of Soviet Russia as an accomplished fact, and we believe that we can collaborate in the free education of the people in Communist ideals.

We understand by Communism the recognition of the duty to work and the guarantee of material existence. The abolition of that awful anxiety with regard to material needs in the life of each individual would be without doubt an enormous step forward, and this may indeed be realised. There is no doubt that the luxurious life which the possessing class lives at present cannot be guaranteed to all. The people will have to content themselves with the necessary minimum. When that time comes we shall be able to say aloud the words spoken by Jesus:—

> "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your Heavenly Father feedeth them."

This is indeed the greatest beauty of the collectivist system—the free enjoyment for every human being of all of nature's treasures, and of all the treasures of the sciences and the arts.

CONCLUSION: AN APPEAL.

The absence of moral basis, of the "categorical imperative," of active moral force, compels the Communists to have recourse to external force, to violence and terror, in order to make themselves respected. They are building up beautiful buildings on a foundation which cannot last. We fully approve their plans of construction, we admire the beauty of their architecture, but we fear that the whole building will come to destruction if a more solid foundation does not replace that which has been used in the passion to build quickly.

Our aim is not the destruction of anything which has been built, but to put in well-shaped stones for the support of the whole building.

There is one other aspect of the present system which wins our sympathy, and that is the recognition of the workers' rights, which formally did not exist at all. The capitalist system must resign its power, in the name of Eternal Justice. We turn towards the two parties that are struggling with each other and speak these words of reconciliation. We should like to say to the workers: "You are right. You are the creators of the world, but in order to attain and preserve your supremacy, do not revenge yourselves on your oppressors." We would like also to say to the possessing class: "The time has come for you to give place to those who, up to now, have maintained and created your life; and if you are willing to meet them with goodwill, you, too, will have your humble place at the banquet of New Life."

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