

BOLSHEVIKS

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THE FACTS ABOUT THE BOLSHEVIKS

COMPILED FROM THE ACCOUNTS OF
TRUSTWORTHY EYE-WITNESSES AND
THE RUSSIAN PRESS

BY

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INTRODUCTION

So many conflicting statements have been made in this country about the Bolsheviks, both in denunciation of them and in their favour, that a plain account of the facts in regard to the condition of those parts of Russia in which they are in power must be of interest to the general public. It is the aim of this pamphlet to present as objective and dispassionate a picture as possible of Bolshevik rule, based upon the evidence only of trustworthy eye-witnesses, and, as far as possible, of the Bolsheviks' official Press and publications. The short summary of the events which preceded the Bolsheviks' rise to power and of the ideas upon which the Bolsheviks' leaders base their legislation is inserted in order that readers may be acquainted with the position in Russia in November 1917, when the Bolsheviks overthrew Kerensky's Provisional Government.

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TO THE
ASSOCIATION

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THE RISE OF THE BOLSHEVIKS; THEIR AIMS AND ORGANISATION.

RUSSIA IN 1917 AND 1918.

FOR two or three months after the fall of the Tsarist Government in March 1917 Russia enjoyed a period of freedom and enthusiasm. Then, when the need pressed for the disciplined consolidation of the results of the revolution, the terrible fact became clear that the old *régime*, by repressing all popular initiative and holding the bulk of the nation in almost semi-Asiatic subjection, had atrophied political leadership and understanding among the people. No really representative body came into existence; the Duma, which had been elected on a very narrow basis, was considered to represent only the nobility and the richer merchants and peasants, while the Soviets, of which the Petrograd Soviet was the chief, sought to represent only the workmen of the towns and the soldiers in the Army. The Provisional Governments of Lvov and Kerensky tried to form a temporary coalition of these two organisations to tide over the difficult period until the elections for the Constituent Assembly, which were to be held in November. But the task of holding the country together until then

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proved beyond their strength. The pressure of the enemy on enormous fronts, the terrible toll of life (1,700,000 dead), the economic exhaustion of the country after three years of war and blockade, the ceaseless propaganda of extreme groups, encouraged and even inspired by enemy sources—all this at last broke down the resistance of the saner elements in the country, and Russia fell into anarchy and civil war. There came to the top the most energetic and extreme of all the political parties, the Bolsheviks,* who alone promised the people an easy and honourable peace, plenty of food and supplies, and complete civil and political freedom.

The Bolsheviks seized power in November 1917. Since then they have succeeded in maintaining their authority, despite innumerable revolts against them in Petrograd, Moscow, and other towns, and almost daily risings among the peasantry. The Bolsheviks began to feel their feet about May 1918, when they disarmed and suppressed the Anarchist groups in Petrograd. In July 1918 an important Soviet Congress was held in Moscow, at which the "Soviet Constitution" was drawn up. By the end of 1918 the Bolsheviks found themselves cut off from the rest of the world.

* The word "Bolshevik" means "majority man," and was the term applied to the majority section at a Conference of the Russian Social-Democratic Party in 1903. The minority of those taking part in the Conference, *i.e.*, the "Mensheviks" ("minority men"), were in favour of a progressive development towards their aims, but the Bolsheviks stood out for extreme measures. The word "Bolshevik" has no connection with "government by the majority," etc.

The principal organised Russian forces in the field against the Bolsheviks are Admiral Kolchak's army in the East, and General Denikin's in the South. The former, with the aid of Czecho-Slovak regiments, has preserved Siberia and the Urals from the Bolsheviks, while General Denikin's army, formerly led by Generals Alexeiev and Kornilov, has prevented the spread of Bolshevism in the Causasus. These two bodies are now associated with the anti-Bolshevik Archangel Government (which is led by the veteran revolutionary, Chaikovsky) and other anti-Bolshevik groups in an All-Russian Government, situated at present at Omsk under the leadership of Admiral Kolchak. The aim of the All-Russian Government is to overthrow the Bolsheviks and restore order and communications inside Russia, so that a new Constituent Assembly may be elected freely and without intimidation by the nation to settle its future form of government.

The first Constituent Assembly, it will be recalled, was dispersed by the Bolsheviks in December 1917 as unrepresentative, because, although the majority of its members belonged to Socialist parties, the Bolsheviks were in a minority. The Bolsheviks have failed to keep their other promises to the people. They concluded, it is true, the shameful Brest-Litovsk peace with the Central Powers in February 1918, but the country has been at civil war ever since. How far the Bolsheviks have given Russia the plenty and the freedom they promised in 1917 will be seen from what follows.

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THE BOLSHEVIKS' AIMS—

The best account in a few words of the Bolshevik aims occurs in the Constitution of the Bolshevik Republic (July 10th, 1918).

“The chief duty of the present transition period of the Constitution of the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic consists in the establishment of the dictatorship of the town and country proletariat and the poorest peasantry in the form of a powerful All-Russian Soviet Government for the complete suppression of the *bourgeoisie*, the abolition of exploitation of one individual by another, and the establishment of Socialism under which neither class differences nor a State power will exist.”

Lenin himself has said that the Bolshevik *régime* in Russia is only an experiment, intended as a precedent to be followed by the proletariat of countries more advanced and thus better fitted than Russia for it. “Lenin does not know the Russian people,” wrote Maxim Gorky in the spring of 1918, “but he does know how to incite masses . . . For Lenin the proletariat is what mines are for a metallurgist. Can a Socialist State be created from these minerals? Of course not. And Lenin knows it.” Since their triumph, the Bolsheviks have changed their name to the “Communist Party,” but the more usual title is retained throughout this pamphlet.

—AND ORGANISATION.

The Bolsheviks' administration rests upon a pyramid of “Soviets” (*i.e.* “Councils”) which are sup-

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posed to be elected and re-elected freely by the town and country proletariat in their various wards and parishes. At the top of the pyramid of Parish Soviets, Village Soviets, City Soviets, County Soviets, District Soviets, etc., is the Congress of Soviets, which elects a Central Executive Committee. The latter elects and works with the "People's Commissaries" in a score of "Commissariats" or Ministries. Every Soviet has its commissaries who are supposed to control various functions of the administration and also supervise the actions of Soviets of lower grades than themselves. The Red Army is nominally under the control of the People's Commissary for Military Affairs, but its detachments are at the beck and call of every commissary, however humble; it is by summoning the Red Guards, or threatening to do so, that the Commissaries maintain their authority in the towns and countryside.

Mr. Keeling,* who knows intimately many Bolshevik Commissaries and met many more of them when he was travelling about the country in 1918, says that, while some of them are quite sincere Bolsheviks, "most of them are quite young; some are notorious bad characters, and many are mere boys whom we should call hooligans in London. One boy of seventeen I knew was Commissary with power of life and death over forty villages." Even the Bolsheviks'

* For Mr. Keeling's exceptional qualifications to speak, see p. 31. The statements attributed to him in this pamphlet are taken in part from conversations with him, and in part from the interview with him, *Bolshevism as it is*, published at 1d. by the Westminster Gazette, Ltd., Tudor Street, London, E.C. 4.

papers, in spite of a strict censorship, contain ever more numerous complaints of the inefficiency and imperiousness of the Commissaries.

The Commissaries' corruption is a byword in the Press. "There is a new sort of mouse," remarks a contributor to *Pravda* (February 11, 1919); "it eats up the produce of warehouses that have been sealed up by the Soviets, and so it is known as the 'Soviet mouse,' for obvious reasons." The *Pravda* is the official organ of the Bolshevik party.

DO THE BOLSHEVIKS REPRESENT THE RUSSIAN PEOPLE ?

THE Soviet elections are admittedly unrepresentative. Any district, town, urban district, factory, workshop or village which elects a Soviet not sufficiently Bolshevik in composition is in effect disfranchised. Their representatives may, for instance, be excluded by the Bolshevik majority from the body to which they are chosen. It is notorious that in the summer of 1918 the Opposition Socialist parties were ordered to withdraw from the Soviet Congress. Or, if the Bolsheviks are in a sufficiently large majority on a Soviet, they may be content to outvote their opponents; this comparative tolerance is rare and of short duration. To ensure having a majority the Bolsheviks resort to various devices. They will declare elections at which a non-Bolshevik is elected null and void, and employ methods to ensure that at the new election a Bolshevik is returned. For

example, Trade Unions are threatened with the loss of their food privileges if they do not elect Bolshevik officials. Factories are warned that their supplies will be cut off and wages withheld unless they vote Bolshevik. Villages that do not vote Bolshevik have Red Guards quartered upon them who wield a preponderating vote and terrorise the village during the period preceding the re-election.

In the elections to the Petrograd Soviet in June 1918 most of the big factories elected non-Bolshevik representatives. However, as only 300 of the 700 places were filled by direct ballot, the Bolsheviks were able to fill the remaining places with their nominees and so to outvote the workmen's own choices. Much stir was caused last year by events that followed a Soviet election in March 1918 at Zlatoüsk, an industrial town near Ufa. This is frequently quoted as a typical instance of Bolshevik electioneering. For 21 seats in the local Soviet, only three Bolsheviks were elected. A few days afterwards Red Guards from neighbouring towns occupied Zlatoüsk, searched the houses and persons of all inhabitants of any note, no matter to what class they belonged, and made many arrests. Thousands of workmen chose a Committee to protest against these outrages; two of the Committee were at once imprisoned by the Bolsheviks, whose youthful commander declared all the prisoners to be "counter-revolutionaries." Another meeting of protest was held, attended by thousands of workmen and by a hundred peasant delegates from the countryside, whereupon the Bolsheviks declared that the whole city was "counter-revolutionary." (*Freedom*

of *Russia*, a Socialist paper, April 11, 1918; also *The Workman's Voice* and *Ufa Life*, both Ufa papers then permitted by the Bolsheviki.)

The Soviet elections, everywhere, like the Trade Union and all other elections, are now a travesty of representation. If persuasion, threats, or violence during the election have no effect and the voters do not elect Bolsheviki, they are subjected to punitive violence or, at best, to disfranchisement. The Bolsheviki apparently dare not allow elections to be held in such a way that the people could record their vote freely and without intimidation.

It may be added that the rumours which have been given currency from time to time that the other Russian Socialist parties have rejoined the Bolsheviki are untrue. In every such case, as soon as any group claiming to represent a party has expressed its sympathy with the Bolsheviki, other bodies, claiming with equal right to represent the party, have immediately declared their hostility to the Bolsheviki.*

A significant hint of the real strength of the Bolsheviki is given in the *Pravda*, March 1, 1919; it was discovered that in a sailors' battalion, reputed the most Bolshevik of all Russians, there were only four declared Bolsheviki and 100 "sympathisers"!

As far back as the end of May 1918 a bureau

* I have full details of these party splits, which are not, however, of sufficient general interest to reprint here. It must be remembered that the meetings and publications of parties not avowedly in alliance with the Bolsheviki are prohibited; and their political views therefore cannot be publicly expressed.

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of the workmen in the Sormovo works declared that :

“ The [Bolshevik] Government has lost the confidence of the people ; it can achieve nothing and is only making worse the already unhappy condition of the country. The majority of Soviets have not been re-elected ; and where they have been re-elected, the new Soviets have been dispersed, *e.g.* at Suizran, Yaroslavl, Rybinsk, Tula, Tver, Briansk. The discontent of the masses is assuming a passionate character. The workers ought not, however, to seek a way out in excesses and acts of violence, but in organised political actions. This bureau proposes to instruct its representatives to demand the immediate resignation of the Soviet Government, the renewal of the work of the Constituent Assembly, the re-establishment of political freedom, the formation of independent Trade Unions, etc.” (*New Life*, Maxim Gorky’s paper, June 4 1918.)

The result of this declaration will be found on p. 26.

HOW DO THE BOLSHEVIKS MAINTAIN THEIR POWER ?

THE “ RED TERROR.”

THE “ Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-revolution ” came into being in 1918 with branches all over the country and spies everywhere. The E.C.C.C. has the power of life and death over the whole people, and even prominent Bolsheviks protest against its unlimited powers. By its constitution, they point out,

“ Personal safety is to a certain extent guaranteed only to members of the Government, of the Central Executive Council and of the local Executive Committees. With the exception of these few persons all members even of the

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local committees of the [Bolshevik] Party, of the Control Committees and of the Executive Committee of the Party may be shot at any time by the decision of any Extraordinary Committee of a small district town if they happen to be on its territory, and a report of this made afterwards.”
—(*Pravda*, October 8, 1918.)

The Bolsheviks never used to deny the reality of their “frightfulness.” Zinoviev, the leader of the Petrograd Soviet, declared that

“To overcome our enemies we must have our own Socialist militarism. We must win over to our side 90 millions out of the 100 millions of people in Soviet Russia. As for the rest, we have nothing to say to them: they must be annihilated.”—(*Northern Commune*, the official organ of the Petrograd Soviet, September 19, 1918.)

A favourite method adopted by the Bolsheviks to strengthen their power is to arrest large numbers of innocent people as “hostages” for the behaviour of the rest of the population. For example,

“TVER, September 9. The E.C.C.C. has arrested in the town and confined in concentration camps over 130 hostages from among the *bourgeoisie*. These include members of the Constitutional-Democratic party, of the Right Socialist-Revolutionary party, as well as ex-officers, prominent members of the propertied class, and ex-policemen.”—(*Northern Commune*, September 10, 1918.)

This shows that even Socialists are reckoned among the “*bourgeois*” hostages. In actual fact, any Russian who excites the suspicions of the Bolsheviks is liable to arrest and death as a “*bourgeois*” or a “counter-revolutionary.” So long as the Bolsheviks permitted non-Bolshevik papers to appear, these were full of workmen’s protests against the arbitrary arrest or

shooting of their fellows. The Bolsheviks' own papers also have printed very numerous accounts of the murder of hostages. For instance,

“BIELY (Smolensk Government), October 1. The E.C.C.C. has had 50 hostages shot for an attempt upon the life of one of its members, Marchenkov.”—(*Red Gazette*, published by Petrograd Soviet, October 3, 1918).

“In Perm in retaliation for the assassination of Uritsky and the attempt on Lenin [both these events happened a thousand miles away from Perm] 50 hostages from among the *bourgeoisie* and the white guards were shot.”—(*Northern Commune*, September 18, 1918.)

Our opponents “have forgotten that, for one, we shoot thousands,” grimly writes the *Red Gazette* (September 15, 1918). The same paper on September 4, 1918, was complaining, in connection with the death of Uritsky and the attack on Lenin, that

“Instead of the several thousands of white guards and their *bourgeois* inspirers whom we were promised, only a few hundreds have been shot.”

So much for the “hostages.” As for the more direct methods of the Red Terror, the following are typical examples:—

“YAROSLAVL, September 9. In the whole of the Yaroslavl Government a strict registration of the *bourgeoisie* and its partisans has been organised. Openly anti-Soviet elements are being shot; suspects are confined in concentration camps; non-working sections of the population are subjected to forced labour.”—(*Northern Commune*, September 10, 1918.)

“For the assassination of Comrade Egórov, 152 counter-revolutionaries have been shot by the Pensa E.C.C.C.”—(*Izvestiya*, the official organ of the Bolshevik Government, October 6, 1918.)

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“In Novo-Rjevsk the E.C.C.C. has had the Roslikh family of five persons shot.”—(*Red Gazette*, September 10, 1918.)

“In Astrakhan the E.C.C.C. has shot ten Right Socialist-Revolutionaries involved in a plot against the Soviet power.”—(*Northern Commune*, September 18, 1918.)

“In Karamysheva a priest named Liubimov and a deacon named Kvintil have been shot for counter-revolutionary agitation against the decree separating the Church from the State and for an appeal to overthrow the Soviet Government.”—(*Northern Commune*, September 18, 1918.)

Lest it should be thought that these massacres are isolated or exceptional,* a paragraph in a resolution passed by one of the Petrograd Soviets on September 5, 1918, may be quoted :—

“This meeting welcomes the fact that Mass Terror is being employed against the white guards and the upper *bourgeois* classes, and declares that every attempt on the life of any of our leaders will be answered by the proletariat by the shooting down not only of hundreds, as is the case now, but of thousands of white guards, bankers, manufacturers, Constitutional Democrats and Right Socialist-Revolutionaries.”—(*Northern Commune*, September 18, 1918, evening edition.)

The Bolsheviks' prisons, conditions in which are indescribable, are filled with thousands upon thousands of untried political prisoners. Consequently, the Red Guards often prefer to shoot down their prisoners

* Many such quotations from the Bolshevik official Press are to be found in the columns of the *Russian Commonwealth* (4, Warwick Court, Holborn, W.C. 1: 6d. fortnightly.), in the publications of the Russian Liberation Committee, 173 Fleet Street, E.C. 4, and in the British Government White Paper on *Bolshevism in Russia*, April 1919.

than to take them to the prisons. Already in May 1918 the heads of the Moscow Red Guard "determined" to put down this practice.—(*New Life*, Maxim Gorky's paper, May 21, 1918.) Recent reports, however, show no improvement in this respect.

THE RED ARMY.

BESIDES the alien groups of homeless¹ Finnish and Lettish Red Guards and the battalion of² Chinese ex-coolies, the Red Army is largely composed of un-
 3' employed workmen, sometimes genuine Bolsheviks, but mainly men avowedly attracted by the offer of comparatively plentiful food, fuel, and loot for themselves and their families, and⁴ of young and ignorant peasants who have been secured by clever Bolshevik propaganda. They are unreliable in the extreme, and desert in thousands.

"The army," says Mr. Keeling, "is fed before any one else, and out of all proportion to the other classes. Even the workmen get nothing till the army has had enough. So large numbers of men join the army for the sake of getting food, and then, when they are in, they have to keep at it for fear of losing their food. Besides, if they try any tricks, they are not only punished, *i.e.* shot, themselves, but their wives and families and parents are starved . . . The soldiers have to be pretty careful, for there are lots of spies among them, who instantly report any suspicious case, and when they go into action there are always machine-guns behind them."

All the former officers of the old armies who have been conscripted for the Red Army have to guarantee

their loyalty to the Bolsheviks with the persons of their family, who are liable to arrest in case of any "treachery or betrayal" of the Bolsheviks by the officers. Discipline is lax and *moral* low in the Bolshevik forces, except among the men who have passed through the Bolshevik military schools.

THE PRESS AND PUBLIC MEETINGS.

THE Bolsheviks have suppressed all papers in Soviet Russia except those which reflect their views—and the German *Neue Petrograde Zeitung*. An official announcement in the *Izvestiya* of October 17, 1918, said that

"At the present moment the requirements of the population of Soviet Russia for means of daily information are adequately met by the Soviet publications. Employment for journalists is secured in the Soviet papers."

Already on September 20, 1918, "the distribution of all printed matter" was put under the control of an *ad hoc* Bolshevik organisation. Thus neither newspapers, pamphlets, nor books can be published in Bolshevik Russia except by the Bolsheviks themselves.* And even the Bolshevik papers are under very strict censorship; they are forbidden, for instance, to mention cases of "theft and desertion, epidemics and fires, capture and surrender of Red Guards."—(*Pravda*, January 16, 1919.)

* A Menshevik paper was twice allowed to appear at Moscow during January and February 1919 but on each occasion the Bolsheviks suppressed it within a few days. The same thing happened to a Socialist-Revolutionary paper in March.

Similarly, any form of political activity in the form of speeches and meetings is forbidden, except with the permission of the Bolsheviks. Zinoviev published a decree (*Northern Commune*, September 12, 1918) according to which "all societies, unions and associations—political, economic, artistic, religious, etc.—in the northern region" must be registered, with the names and addresses of all members, with the local Bolshevik organisation; "three days' notice at least must be given of all public and private meetings" to the Bolshevik representatives, who, if permission to hold the meeting be given, must be allowed to be present. Any societies not complying with these rules "will be regarded as counter-revolutionary organisations and prosecuted." Even when all formalities are complied with, it is not unusual for the Bolsheviks to close the meeting and arrest the people taking part in it. Meetings of the Bolsheviks themselves are often forbidden.

Any political party opposed to the Bolsheviks is declared "illegal" whenever necessary. Thus, for example, the only remaining political allies of the Bolsheviks, the Left Socialist-Revolutionary Party, was proclaimed in February 1919 and lists of arrests of its members have appeared in *Pravda* (e.g. February 13, 1919).

FOOD.

THE extent and severity of the famine in the Russian towns cannot be exaggerated. Thousands

of the inhabitants have died, and are dying now, of starvation. The inhabitants were divided by the Bolsheviks into four categories:—(i) Soviet officials and their friends, and manual workers; (ii) clerical workers; (iii) employers, whether of one or a thousand persons; (iv) aristocrats, ex-landowners, etc. The system has been modified in many ways since, but the greatest reward that any one can receive for active support of the Bolsheviks is a food-card of the first category; the price of hostility or even open indifference to the Bolsheviks is the loss of one's food-card. "Whole trade unions," says Mr. Keeling, "have been degraded because they opposed the Bolsheviks, or offended them somehow"; an example of this is the Teachers' Union; it was dissolved as counter-revolutionary, and a new union was formed to which only professed Bolsheviks were admitted. In most cases, as in that of the Typographical Union, to which Mr. Keeling belonged, the members were forced in October 1918 to sign forms declaring themselves either Bolsheviks or sympathisers with Bolshevism, on pain of being excluded from the Union with all its attendant circumstances, *e.g.* losing their first category food-cards; this was not sufficient, however, and in December 1918 they were all compelled once more to sign forms, this time declaring themselves actual Bolsheviks. Although, says Mr. Keeling, only a very small proportion of the men were anything but bitterly opposed to the Bolsheviks, they signed the forms, rather than condemn their families and themselves to death by starvation.

Here is a typical ration list for Petrograd as advertised officially :—

July 10.

| | |
|----------------|--|
| 1st category : | $\frac{1}{4}$ lb. bread, 2 eggs, 1 lb. fish. |
| 2nd ,, | $\frac{1}{8}$ lb. bread, 1 lb. fish. |
| 3rd ,, | $\frac{1}{8}$ lb. bread, $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. fish. |
| 4th ,, | $\frac{1}{16}$ lb. bread, 3 herrings. |

—(*Northern Commune*, the official organ of the Petrograd Soviet, July 10, 1918.)

In actual fact, it is rarely that even these graduated rations have been available. “For a long time past nothing has been sold but bread,” says Mr. Keeling, “and even that failed for several days in December.” Fortunate inhabitants can sometimes obtain secretly food that has been smuggled into the city from outside ; the prices for this in January averaged as follows :—

| | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| Herrings (each) | 20—30 roubles.* |
| Butter (1 lb.) | 120 ,, |
| Bread (1 lb.) | 25 ,, |

“But,” says Mr. Keeling, “I have had roubles worth £600, according to old values, in my pocket, and not been able to buy a piece of bread. You don’t trouble about money ; you pay five shillings for a lump of sugar, if you can get it.” The inhabitants of Petrograd are reduced to eating even dogs’ flesh. A writer in *Pravda*, March 4, 1919, describes the

* The rouble is the Russian unit of money and represents two shillings English.

ravenous people in the Public Kitchens who lick up the leavings on more fortunate diners' plates.

In some parts of the country the peasants have corn stored away, but, as Bolshevik paper-money has no longer any value for them, and the townspeople have almost nothing else to offer in exchange, the peasants will part with their corn neither to the Bolsheviks nor to peaceful townspeople. In other parts even the peasants are starving. In the summer of last year the position in Petrograd was so serious that the Bolsheviks began to allow inhabitants to go into the country and trade for corn what few valuables (jewellery, etc.) they still possessed and bring it back to the towns; but this privilege was soon withdrawn, and the Bolsheviks absolutely prohibited the townsfolk to go in and out of the city except on official Bolshevik business or with exceptional permission. Children are given first category cards, but the ration is not sufficient for them.

The Bolsheviks maintain their authority in the towns by the inevitable starvation of all who do not profess active Bolshevik sympathies. The least suspicion leads to the loss of one's food-card, which means starvation. The Red Army, on the other hand, is kept comparatively well fed, provisions for it now being obtained mainly by armed raids by detachments of Red Guards upon villages suspected of hoarding corn.

The food situation in Moscow and other towns is little, if at all, better than in Petrograd. Meanwhile, there are millions of bushels of corn rotting in the corn districts in Soviet Russia because, even when armed

detachments of Red Guards have collected it, the railways are so disorganised that it cannot be transported to the towns.—(*Pravda*, March 1, 1919.)

All Soviet Russia is stricken with eruptive typhus.—(*Izvestiya*, March 4, 1919.)

THE LAND.

RUSSIA is predominantly an agricultural country ; although, unlike in most other countries, the rural inhabitants do not live in isolated homesteads, but all together in villages. Thus, more than elsewhere, the political theories of the towns affect the country very closely. From the outbreak of the Russian Revolution in March 1917, the chief internal reform was considered to be the handing over of the land to the peasants. This was to be effected legally and constitutionally by the Constituent Assembly ; however, as a result of the Bolsheviks' triumph, no such orderly distribution was any longer possible, and the peasants seized the land at haphazard.

In March 1918 the *New Life* wrote that :

“ All observers of the village to-day are unanimously of the opinion that the process of disintegration and demoralisation is proceeding there with irresistible force. Having plundered the estates of the landowners, having shared out among themselves or simply destroyed the inventory and stock on those estates, having even taken to pieces the buildings, the peasants are now preparing for war against one another for the division of the spoil. To this is added the calamity of famine. In some districts the population has long ago consumed all the available

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stocks of corn, including seed-corn, while in others the peasants, having had a good harvest, are hiding corn, and even burying it, in order not to share it with their starving neighbours. All this must lead, and in some cases has already led, to a war of all against all, and to the most senseless chaos and universal destruction and murder."

In the happiest cases the peasants divided the land, says Mr. Keeling, quite fairly amongst themselves. "But the trouble is," he points out, "that while there is plenty of land in one village, there is nothing like enough in another, so the distribution is very unequal, and there is great discontent in consequence."

In June 1918 the Bolshevik Government, anxious to give a new impulse to their waning popularity, issued a decree authorising "Poverty Committees" to be created throughout the country to control the local Soviets and supervise food distribution, etc. Thus in the villages a new body, composed of the landless peasants, was set up over against the established peasants' Soviets. As was intended, this led to bitter strife between the two groups, and soon the further step was taken of dissolving the Soviets and "re-electing them," as the order went, "under the control and guidance of the Poverty Committees," which, after the re-election, were to disappear and leave the Soviets in control. But only such Poverty Committees as were guaranteed by Bolshevik Commissaries to be "really organisations of the actual labouring class" were allowed to control the elections, and the Commissaries had the power to disfranchise any peasant or groups of peasants as undesirable voters and, in case even then the new Soviet was not wholly com-

posed of real or pretended Bolsheviks, to declare the election void.

Resistance was met by the summoning of a force of Red Guards. Thus by one means or another the village Soviets were made to come into the hands of professed Bolsheviks. But since the Bolshevik decrees about the land ran counter to the real will of the peasantry—were this not so, there would have been no need for the drastic changes of policy—the peasants are producing less corn and becoming more dissatisfied wherever the Bolsheviks are able to make their power felt, and are producing more and living more after their own desires where the Bolshevik authority is only nominal. In either case the towns of Soviet Russia receive little corn.

The Red Guards' mounted raids with rifles and machine-guns to obtain corn from the villages have set the peasantry more than ever against the Bolsheviks. Not a day passes without a peasant rising somewhere and conflicts with the Red Guards.

INDUSTRY.

THE Petrograd papers at the end of May 1918 published the findings of the Bolsheviks' official inquiry into the position of Russian industry made by their Labour Commissariat. Its statement about Petrograd was as follows. (These official figures relate to 91 per cent. of all the workers engaged in industry in Petrograd between January 1, 1917, and April 1, 1918.)

“ Out of 365,000 workmen in 832 factories in Petro-

grad, 144,000 only remained" on April 1st, 1918. Thus 221,000, or roughly 60 per cent., had left Petrograd. Of these "the great mass, 176,000, left in the first three months of 1918." The decrease among the metal-workers amounted to 75 per cent.; out of 245,000, only 64,000 remained. In the chemical industry, out of 23,000, only 5,000 remained. In the textile industry, out of 39,000, 29,000 remained, but, the report noted, this figure became considerably less during April. There was a higher percentage of stoppages of production in the big factories (*i.e.* those with more than 500 workers) than in the small; 67 per cent. of the workmen who had left Petrograd were Trade Unionists (*i.e.* skilled and semi-skilled workmen).—(*New Life*, May 26.)

At a conference of "nationalised metal-works," held at Moscow in the same month (May 1918), the following were quoted as typical instances of the condition of the metal industry. The works in question are among the best known in Russia.

"In the Maltzev works 600 railway-wagons used to be turned out in a month; now only from 24 to 30 are produced." And "in the Kolometz works the monthly expenses are 5½ million roubles, and the value of what is produced amounts only to ½ million roubles monthly."—(*New Life*, May 20, 1918.)

Owing to the lack of any organised industrial system, and the consequent chaos, the position has got infinitely worse since that time. Mr. Keeling, whose business as a machinery repairer gave him the best

possible insight into industrial conditions, declares that, at the end of 1918, the output of the factories still working was not more than 10 per cent. of their usual standard. The factories have become virtually workmen's clubs, where they meet, talk, and qualify for their food-cards. It is no longer possible to compare the value in roubles of the goods produced with the sums distributed in wages and concessions to the workmen, the latter sum so immensely exceeding the former.

Already in May 1918 the industrial position was alluded to at the Conference of Supply Soviets as an "economic Bohemia."—(*New Life*, May 30.) Later in the year the German Socialist paper *Vorwärts*, reviewing the industrial position in Russia, said, "Instead of Socialism we have a madhouse."* The money spent in subsidising the "socialised" factories amounted to several milliards; and hundreds of thousands of workmen were being maintained at the cost of the State.

"Never before have I seen so many unemployed in Russia," said M. Oudendijk, the Dutch Ambassador, who left Moscow at the end of 1918.

The postal system is in a state of collapse; while

* Eduard Bernstein, the well-known German Socialist, declared at the International Socialist Conference at Berne that "the Bolsheviks are the real counter-revolutionaries." The Bolsheviks retorted upon the Berne Conference by referring to the commission appointed by it to report on conditions in Soviet Russia—the commission was to include Messrs. Ramsay MacDonald, C. R. Buxton, Kautsky, Friedrich Adler, etc.—as a "commission of Socialist-traitors." (*Pravda*, February 15, 1919.)

conditions on the railways are such that, when trains run at all,—there is only one a day between Petrograd and Moscow—they are so slow that, as a Bolshevik official writes,

“It took me eight days to get from Simbirsk to Ufa (360 miles). The situation is undoubtedly abnormal. This is explained by the lack of systematic organisation for bringing the railway into a normal condition.”
—(*Pravda*, March 1, 1919.)

“Train-tickets are obtained mainly by bribery.”—
(*Pravda*, February 11, 1919.)

TRADE UNIONS.

DURING the summer of 1918 the workmen of Petrograd, Moscow, Tula, Sormovo, Kolomna, Tver, Nijni-Novgorod, Vologda, Orel, and other industrial centres organised an independent representative Labour body led by the “Assembly of Petrograd Workshop and Factory Delegates.” A conference, attended by elected representatives of the workmen of these towns, met at Moscow, but those taking part in it were arrested by the Red Guard at their second meeting, on July 23, 1918, and flung into prison as “hostages.” A letter of protest which they succeeded in sending from their prison was printed in the *Workmen's International* (the organ of the Petrograd Mensheviks) on August 7, 1918. The following are the salient points in this long document:—

“The delegates were sent to the conference by assemblies of works and factory delegates who have tens of thousands of electors behind them. The adopted

basis of representation was one delegate for each 5,000 workmen." "The conference of workmen's delegates was convened to make arrangements for the convocation of an All-Russian Labour Congress, and had held two meetings. The agenda of the conference included the following: measures against the disintegration of the working-class movement; projects for effecting a concentration of its forces and proper organisation; arrangements for an All-Russian Labour Congress. But the Bolshevik Government, like their Tsarist predecessors, do not tolerate any symptoms of an independent working-class movement, because it is this movement which constitutes a menace to their power. In this movement they see a reflection of the food crisis, and, incapable of solving the administrative problems in front of them, they are resorting to repressive measures against the leaders of the working-class movement. Workmen's organisations are being subjected to incredible repressions." The letter is signed by the imprisoned delegates, many of them Trade Union officials. That they were not usurping the representative position they claimed is corroborated by Gorky's *New Life*, which had already, on May 21, 1918, declared that "the centre of working Petrograd is little by little tending away from the Soviet to the 'Association of Workshop and Factory Delegates.' The Bolsheviks, however, do not want to cede their position, and hence relations between the workmen and the Soviet authorities are growing unfriendly. The Soviet authorities depend in many cases only on the power of the Red Guards' bayonets."

At the general meeting of "all productive Petrograd workmen" at the beginning of June 1918 the Bolshevik representatives declared that

"Employees have no right to judge or criticise the measures of the administration, and every such criticism will be regarded as an attack upon the Soviet authority; all taking part or being present at such meetings will be considered by the administration as evil-doers."—(Quoted in *New Life*, June 5, 1918.)

Thus by the threat of arrest by the Red Guard or of loss of their food-cards, the workmen and their Trade Unions are terrorised into subjection to the Bolshevik authorities. Nevertheless the Russian papers all through 1918 were full of reports of political strikes and disturbances among the workers in the industrial centres of Russia. Even the printers of the most Bolshevik of all the Bolsheviks' papers, the *Red Gazette*, issued a manifesto as far back as May 1918 against the Bolsheviks' suppression of freedom of election, speech, meetings and the Press, and in favour of the Constituent Assembly.—(*New Life*, May 26.) Mr. Keeling was in the printing works of the *Red Gazette* in December 1918, and in the course of half an hour's conversation it became evident to him that at least four-fifths of the workers there were opposed to the continuance of Bolshevik rule.

The following statement has been sworn to by an Englishman just returned from Moscow :—

"At the Visokovskaya Cotton Manufacturing Company 6,500 workmen were employed. At the elections for

the Main Factory Committees in January 1919 it was discovered that there would be only 142 workmen who declared themselves Bolsheviks, and of these at least 110 were lads not over 20. As these were not enough to form the Main Committees the Bolsheviks introduced from other mills a number of Bolsheviks to fill up their places. This caused great dissatisfaction amongst the workmen and they struck for one day, made a demonstration, and attempted to burn down the local Soviet, which was composed of people from the surrounding districts. The Bolsheviks then sent five motor lorries of Red Guards from Klin and eight agitators from Moscow. They suppressed the rising and shot nine members of the Committee.

“ In November 1918 there was a big strike in a Danilovski factory. All the Bolsheviks were flung out by the strikers. Red Guards were thereupon sent, chiefly composed of Chinese, and the strike was suppressed, many of the workmen being shot. Afterwards a small garrison of Red Guards was established in the mill to keep order.

“ At the end of October there was a big strike in the Kolomna Works due to lack of food. The strikers burnt down part of the mill. Again Red Guards were sent to suppress the strike and many members of the Committee were shot.”

EDUCATION.

THE Bolsheviks have issued numerous decrees and appropriated vast sums of paper-money for the furthering of popular education, but, unfortunately, owing to the general conditions of life in the Bolshevik provinces, the lack of personal security, food, fuel, pencils, paper, and other necessary materials, and the persecution and consequent absence of teachers,

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they have not succeeded in replacing the old educational system which they destroyed.*

CO-OPERATION.

AFTER a long struggle the Bolsheviks have at last succeeded in capturing temporarily the Co-operative movement in Soviet Russia, although it has always been the latter's aim to stand aloof from politics and retain its independence. But just as the Bolsheviks have thrust their centralised control upon the local Soviets, the factory committees, the Trade Unions, the Press, and every other form of popular activity, so, too, they have now brought the Co-operative movement under their authority. Thus the Co-operative movement in Soviet Russia is now a cog in the Bolshevik machine, subject to the usual Commissioners' control and abuses. The Bolsheviks openly declare that their objection to the old Co-operative movement is that it was non-party, voluntary and independent (*e.g.* an article in the *Workers' World*, the official organ of the Bolshevik-controlled Co-operative movement, January 1919).

EYE-WITNESSES' STATEMENTS.

THREE statements about the Bolshevik *régime* made by eye-witnesses whose sincerity and competence to

* Details of the Bolsheviks' attitude to education may be found in *Russia Under the Bolsheviks*, by I. V. Shklovsky (Dioneo). (Russian Liberation Committee, 173, Fleet Street, London, E.C. 6d.)

judge are beyond question are appended, with, in each case, the date when the witness left Russia.

Mr. H. V. Keeling (Member of the English Lithographic Artists', Designers', Engravers' and Process-Workers' Society and of the Russian Printing Trade Union, Chief Photographer to the Bolshevik Committee of Public Education). (January 1919.)

"I can assure you that they (the Russian people) are sick to death of it, and that nine-tenths of the people who keep in with the Bolsheviks, and have to pretend to like them, would do anything to get rid of them, if they knew how."

"The British working-people wouldn't stand Bolshevism for one day themselves, and they must take care that they are not helping to force it on the Russian working-people."

M. Oudendijk (Dutch Minister to Russia). (December 1918.)

"I have known Russia intimately for twenty years, and never have the working-classes of Russia suffered as they are doing at the present moment. I have never seen or dreamed of the possibility of such corruption, tyranny, and the absence of all semblance of freedom as there is in Russia at the present day. . . . Wherever Bolshevism rules, the nation has been beaten to a pulp."

M. Puntervold (of the Norwegian Socialist deputation to Russia) (March 1919) told the Swedish *Social-Demokraten* (March 8, 1919) that the Bolsheviks had fully attained the destructive part of their aim,

but that until now at all events they have completely failed in their positive objective, to create a new and better economic system.

“In Russia’s great industrial centres, Moscow and Petrograd, the workers could not possibly be in a worse position than they are at present.” (Swedish *Social-Demokraten*, March 8, 1919.)

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