

A Close-Up View of the Russian Toiler

By COUNT ILYA TOLSTOY

FEW in this country are so well equipped to discuss the Russian situation, Bolshevism, what it means to Russia and to America, as is this writer, Count Ilya Tolstoy, son of the famous Russian novelist and liberal. What he takes up here for discussion should be digested carefully by all who read the article. Bolshevism, says Count Tolstoy, originated as a protest against the slaughter of Russians in war. What it has developed to be is interestingly related.

TO PREVENT Bolshevism in America it is important to know how this disease spread in Russia, what elements of the population were infected and why the industrial population was so easily impressed while the peasantry remained immune and peaceful.

The spirit of Bolshevism in Russia is nothing new. It has been manifested by the Russian people many times in the history of my country. Frequently there have been uprisings of my people, so serious on two occasions that twice the throne was menaced. There were revolts of Stenka Basin during the reign of Alexey Michaislovich and of Pougatheff during the reign of Catherine the Great.

The self-restraint, so strong in the Anglo-Saxon, is undeveloped in the Slavs, especially among uneducated masses.

Bolshevism is but a new word applied to an ancient phenomenon. New excuses have been found for the low instincts of hatred, envy and greed. Were the country in normal condition, Bolshevism would never have triumphed, but could have been easily suppressed. Only a country suffering from terrifying evils of war could succumb to Bolshevism.

The revolution broke out in Russia after she had already lost, in killed, prisoners and crippled, more than all the other Allies together. The internal life of the country was wholly demoralized and Bolshevism took root as a protest against the endless and senseless slaughter of the Russian soldiers.

At the beginning of the revolution the most ardent adherents of Bolshevism were the soldiers who were demoralized by the horrors of the war, but after the demobilization of the Czar's army, Bolshevism was chiefly supported by the industrial labor class of the cities.

In order that my readers may have a clear understanding of the mode of life and the extreme poverty of the Russian workman, let me compare his life with that of the American worker.

Most of the industrial workers of Russia originally belonged to the peasantry. If the peasant has not enough land, or if he has a father or a brother to take care of his household in the country, or if his land is so poor that he can not live on it, or if he wishes to avoid the monotony of country life, he leaves his village, his wife and children and goes to the city. Different provinces of Russia supply a different percentage of city workers. Territories which are extremely sterile send almost all of their male population to the cities.

The industrial workers of the large cities, especially of Moscow and Petrograd, are to a large extent of the class of the peasantry. One of the characteristic features of the Russian industrial workers is that they live alone in the city while their families live in the country, sometimes many hundred miles away. Accordingly the Russian industrial worker sees his family only two or three times a year, and sometimes even less than that. He usually visits his home on Christmas, during Easter Week and sometimes during the mowing of grass. This makes him a homeless proletarian. Frequently his wife has to do the rough work in the fields and at home, while he acquires the vices of the city and his family suffers hunger and need. Having left his native village for the purpose of supporting his family, he soon forgets his home and frequently spends all the money he gets for his own life and pleasure. Thus he loses his connection with his country home and loses all the good qualities of the peasant. Being uneducated and often illiterate, he acquires only a superficial culture, being, at the same time, deprived of any moral support and of the religious traditions, which are so strong among the peasantry.

But the average American worker is not deprived of the comfort of family life.

Before the war 50 cents a day was considered a good price for an average factory worker in Russia. Often it was even lower than that. This was due chiefly to the imperfect machinery, which could not compete with that used in European and American

factories. Accordingly the productivity of the Russian worker in the factories was 30 per cent lower than that of his western brothers.

The Socialists blame capital for all the hardships of the masses. They believe that the income of the employers is so great that if the workers secure this income themselves their material situation will be greatly improved. They do not realize that the average yearly net income derived from Russian industry was only six per cent. If the labor class rids itself of capitalists, and takes all the net income in addition to its wages, it would mean an increase of wages not exceeding 20 per cent.

The poverty of the Russian workers leads to other psychological results, the gravity of which cannot be underestimated.

The difference in the mode of life of the privileged classes in comparison with that of the labor classes in Russia is enormous. In America the worker and his employer eat the same white bread, the same eggs and butter, the same meat; they travel in the same trains; they wear the same coats, the same boots and shirts and live in decent houses. On Sundays the worker is clad in a good suit of clothes and may enjoy life just as much as his employer.

But the Russian worker is deprived of all these things. He eats black bread because it is one cent a pound cheaper than the white. He never eats eggs and butter and gets meat only on holidays. He wears the same old clothing and boots the whole year, week-days and Sundays. He is deprived of all the comforts of life and of all its opportunities. His only pleasure is a bottle of vodka, which often changes him to a brute. Such are the material conditions of his life.

His civil conditions before the revolution were even worse. The Russian worker was a man deprived of all political rights. I once had the patience to enumerate all the different officials to which the Russian peasant was subordinated, beginning by the *starosta* (chief of the village) and ending with the governor. I counted 17. The Russian worker has all the obligations but absolutely no privileges.

In America every citizen has the right to vote. He has at least the illusion that the officials whom he obeys are elected by himself. Any man born in this country may be elected President of the United States. Every man feels free and knows that he has the same opportunities as anyone else.

The first thing that strikes a Russian in America is the great freedom and ease with which one may be addressed by any simple worker. He feels that he is a gentleman and stretches to you his callous hand as to an equal. The conductor on the Pullman car sits in the same parlor where you are and reads the same newspaper. In Russia the conductor never dares take a seat with you. The American worker is Mr. John Smith; the Russian is simply John, Ivan, or even the diminutive, *Vannka*, if you please to call him so.

It is evident, therefore, that when this same *Vannka* came into power, he thought first of his own individual welfare. He was not socially educated. Liberty for him meant license; equality meant depriving others of what they had, for his own sake, and fraternity meant the fraternity of a narrow group of proletarians. Na-

turally the labor class was not anxious to increase its productiveness. They never thought that this had anything to do with their material welfare, but they busied themselves at once with the distribution of the wealth already accumulated. But as this wealth was comparatively small, the country was soon reduced to want.

Such are the characteristic features of the Russian industrial worker that make him unprepared and unfit for the leadership of the revolution. He rushed into it with all the fanaticism of his Slavonic nature, broke all the chains that bound him; but when the time to build up a new state came, his former servitude made him unable to create anything efficient or stable.

Russian peasants eagerly joined the revolution, but when it came to Bolshevism, they soon discovered that their interests were opposed to those of the working class. But the idea of equality was carried out by the peasantry in the same way as by the city workers. Accordingly they divided all the land among themselves. Being absolutely deprived of education, they had less understanding of socialization than the city proletariat. In their simple conception, to socialize meant to divide, and thus they divided everything they could. They divided the land, the buildings, the cattle and the factories. Houses were demolished and costly machines were broken to pieces in order to give every member of the village a certain number of bricks, of timber, of iron and of copper. But when asked to divide their bread with the population of the cities; when asked to socialize their crops, the peasantry revolted, and now is refusing to believe in the benefits of Bolshevism, which deprived him of the commodities of life which his family enjoys, such as tea, sugar, boots, agricultural implements, and even the product of his own labor.

Such is the attitude toward Bolshevism of the rural and urban working classes of Russia.

I think that the Russian middle class does not differ from that in other countries. All of the middle class favored the revolution; but only a few are Bolsheviks. These are mostly Jews, Letts, Finns and others who availed themselves of the opportunity offered to play a leading part in the political life of Russia, opportunities of which they were before deprived.

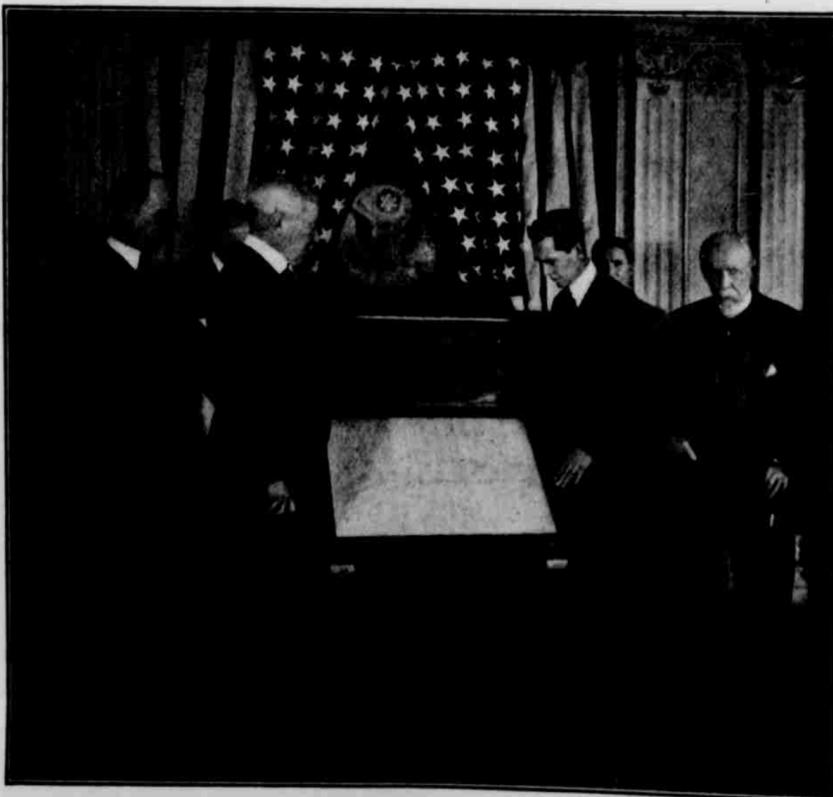
Among the adherents of Bolshevism the intellectuals are still more scarce.

The intellectuals of Russia always fought against the despotism of the Czar; they supplied the country with leaders of the radical movement; they created the liberal literature of Russia; they were first to awake the spirit of democracy all over the country; they worked in the Duma for the revolution and they were the first to join the revolution in March, 1917, but they also were the first to denounce Bolshevism and to fight it wherever and whenever they could.

Resuming, I may say that a Bolshevik revolution such as happened in Russia is impossible in America. The industrial worker in this country is too bourgeois to destroy the industry upon which he lives. He seeks to nationalize industry along evolutionary methods, but realizes the value of the factories and will not destroy them.

Strikes are not a manifestation of Bolshevism; they are inevitable in every civilized country. The improvement in the condition of the life of the worker is the best weapon against the horrors of Bolshevism. Not slavery, but co-operation of capital with labor will save the world from disorder and despair.

Where the Constitution of the United States is Kept



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THE original documents of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States are specially preserved in the archives of the State Department of Washington, and are never revealed to the light except upon occasions of special significance. They represent the official acts, duly

described, signed and sealed, on which this government stands. Our form of government, the power reposed in the government, the guaranties of the American forms of liberty, are all found upon a few pages of hand-written parchment.

The work of actually preparing the Constitution was done in Philadelphia, in Independence Hall and occupied four months. The sessions began, under the leadership of George Washington, on May 14, 1787, and concluded on September 17 of the same year. It was not until the year 1790 that all the Thirteen States accepted the Constitution. An interesting comparison might therefore be drawn between that piece of work and the labor of drafting the constitution of the League of Nations, which occupied some eight months of actual work all told. If the same length of time elapses before the constitution of the League is generally accepted, it will bring us to about the year 1922 or 1923. The photograph shows Secretary of State Lansing—the grey haired gentleman in the cutaway coat—after he had delivered an address on Americanism to the bureau chiefs of his department. The page being shown is the last page of the Constitution which contains the majority of the signatures.