THE NEW BOOKS

The Red Side of Russia

TO help Russia, says the President, is our primary duty. But to help Russia we must first understand her and this seems next to impossible. Apparently we have to unlearn what we thought we knew about the Russian character for part of it wasn't so and the rest of it isn't so any longer. The new Russia is the political antithesis of the old. The old humble devout superstitious conservative peasant, cringing under the knout, worshiping the icon and the Great White Czar, has vanished from the scene and in his place we see a fiery and fantastic creature, the Bolshevik, threatening to overthrow all existing institutions and moral codes thruout the world. Him we must understand if we are to help—or suppress—him.

Here are six new books throwing light on the Russia of the revolution. The first, *Unchained Russia*, is by Charles Edward Russell, who as a Socialist was made a member of the American Commission in order to balance Mr. Root on the other extreme, the idea being presumably, that if Russia were observed from viewpoints so far apart the American people would get a stereoscopic view of the situation. Mr. Russell was from his Socialist position the better fitted to appreciate the new forces at work and he gives us for instance the following clear statement of what the Bolsheviki believe and intend:

1. In common with Mensheviks, Minimalists, Trudeviks, and practically everybody else in Russia, the Bolsheviks accepted the general outlines of the Socialist philosophy. They believed that all wealth is created by labor and that labor is entitled to the wealth it creates. They believed, that is to say, in industrial democracy. They believed that to bring about industrial democracy, all industries should be owned by and operated for the benefit of the community.

2. But they went much further than this by believing that these changes could be and should be wrought at once and that instantly there should be instituted likewise these essential principles:

A. All men and women should work.

B. All men and women that work should be organized into unions.

C. Each union should have its central governing council.

D. These central councils should constitute all the government there is in this world. No congresses, no presidents, no parliaments, no prime ministers, no cabinets, no legislatures, no governors, nothing but the councils of the unions.

With the utmost sincerity they could see nothing about these changes more difficult than the issuing of a proclamation or two.

Mr. Russell is a keen observer and a good writer. but as his visit was brief and formal and he did not undestand the language he could not get an intimate insight into the confused events of the period. Miss Bessie Beatty was most fortunate in getting at what she calls *The Red Heart of Russia*. She was an eye-witness, even a participant, of some of the most exciting scenes of the revolution, and she has the full sense of the dramatic nature of the part she played. For instance, she was waked up out of bed to translate the historic appeal for "peace without annexations and contributions and self-definition of nations," sent out by the All-Russian Congress of Soviets a year ago. No wonder its grammar was confused, for it had to be translated from Russian into Lettish and thence into English:

Here was this new government of the People's Commissaries preparing a document that they confidently hoped would revolutionize the status of a struggling world and there was nobody to translate it but a Lett who had not been to bed for three days, and an American war correspondent.

Miss Beatty lived for a week in the barracks of the Amazonian Battalion of Death. She was on board the mutinous Baltic fleet. She was in the convention when Trotzky and Lenine won their victory. She saw the street fighting on November 11. She visited the deposed ministers of the Kerensky Cabinet in the dungeons of St. Peter and Paul. Her vivid descriptions of these epoch-making scenes will be of permanent historic interest whatever may be the outcome and they will rank in value with such few contemporary sketches as we have of the French Revolution.

Ernest Poole chose a different line of approach, the "case system" of sociology, the "close-up" study of representative individuals. Knowing that 90 per cent of the Russian people were peasants and villagers he left Petrograd and buried himself in a country community in order to get personally acquainted with the people who lived there. We get, then, character sketches, not of the Czar and Rasputin or of Lenine and Trotzky, but of the priest, the teacher, the sorcerer, the peasant, the doctor, the storekeeper and the vagabond. Much of the volume consists of conversation, the opinions and experiences of the people he met as translated by his interpreter. For instance, here is one man's view of the revolution:

It was in Petrograd, the lack of organizing force—or rather, the way such force was spoiled and hindered by the theoreticians scattered about all over the town. In our apartment building, where there were thirty-four families, I said, "Let us stop sending thirty-four servant girls out each day to the bread lines. Let us combine and send two or three to get the bread for all of us." But one tall solemn fellow replied, "In this time of our new-found liberty, each should be free to follow his taste. Some like one bread shop more than another." And to defend such liberty, he went about the building, talking against my little idea, until the people turned it down. Then I made another suggestion. We were afraid robbers might break in, for we knew that many jails had been opened. "Let's organize our defense," I proposed. "Let all the men in the building take turns in standing guard below." But the Solemn One argued against this, too, as a sacrilege to the revolution. "Why should we guard our belongings," he asked, "when Russia is one great brotherhood now? Any man can have my property." It happened that the very next night a sneak thief got up to the attic and stole a shirt which was hanging to dry. And it belonged to the Solemn One. When he heard of his loss, he said pompously, "Plainly some brother is more in need of clean linen than I." I looked at him and doubted it.

Mr. Poole points out very concretely what America can do to help Russia or rather his village—by sending over teachers and money for schools, agricultural machinery and practical experts.

Dr. E. J. Dillon is a living proof of the Russian's delight in self-depreciation. He has lived for years in Russia, he has been honored by the friendship of some of the most prominent Russian statesmen, he has taught in the University of Kharkoff. The result of his life among the Russians has been embodied in books and articles which are without exception the most searching, merciless, scornful indictments of Russian life and character ever printed in the English language. And yet Professor Milyukoff has characterized Dr. Dillon's "Russian Characteristics" (published under the pen name of E. B. Lanin) as the best analysis of Russia available to English readers. Instead of such a roar of wrath as once greeted Dickens's "American Notes" the Russian public has purred its approval of Dr. Dillon's writings and even *The Eclipse of Russia* will not eclipse his popularity.

To Dr. Dillon the "eclipse of Russia" and all the horrors of the Red Terror are the almost inevitable fruit of a national character rotted to the core by ages of unimaginable misgovernment.

For Russia never ceased to be what its founders had made it, a predatory state, without, like Prussia, and a predatory state within, unlike any other out of Asia.

The people had for ages seen robbery, murder, in a word, all kinds of crime, political, private, and absolutely wanton outrages perpetrated in the name of God, the Tsar, and the fatherland by their own educated and spiritual guides. Is it to be wondered at that whenever they had the chance in turn to rob and burn and torture and kill they used it to the full relentlessly?

The excellent brief studies of *The Rus-*

Ernest Poole (center) with some of the Russian peasants he describes in "The Village"

sian Revolution, by Alexander Petrunkevitch, Samuel N. Harper and Frank A. Golder, deepen the impression of Russia as the land of nightmare conveyed so vividly by Dr. Dillon. Mr. Petrunkevitch depicts the

> sad spectacle of an almost complete failure of the majority of intellectuals to understand the spirit of the times and to guide the masses thru the labyrinth of error.

Mr. Harper gives an illuminating chronicle of the political side of the Russian revolution; the attempts on the part of various parties and organizations to establish a stable government and the more successful attempts of other groups to wreck it. Mr. Golder describes vividly the eve of the revolution and its outbreak. The weight of an immemorial tyranny in unfitting the people for self-government is effectively illustrated:

> Strange to say, as evening came a kind of fear seized the population, particularly the more ignorant. It was difficult for them to shake off the terror of the old police; all the time that they were talking against the Tsar they had a feeling that they were doing wrong, and that some one was denouncing them. It was hard for them to believe that all that they saw and heard during the day was real and that the old regime was powerless.

No sounder study of the Russian revolution has been published than that of *Russia in Upheaval*, by Edward Alsworth Ross. In the first place the book is made up of the author's own observations and experiences, collected during a journey of 15,000 miles from Petrograd thru Russia and Siberia during a good part of 1917. In the second place the facts are weighed with the accustomed care and keen judgment of a trained sociologist and the conclusions are arrived at without regard to superficial prejudice.

Dr. Ross, who is professor of sociology in the University of Wisconsin, was sent to Russia by the United States on a mission to investigate social and economic conditions. His findings, therefore, deal not so much with sporadic riots as with the questions of the actual condition of the people, the food supply, the state of agriculture, whether or not the factories and sawmills are busy, what the peasants in outlying villages think. Several articles by Dr. Ross were first published in The Independent after his return from Russia and are now incorporated in this book.

Unchained Russia, by Charles Edward Russell. D. Appleton & Co. $1.50. *The Red Heart of Russia*, by Bessie Beatty. Century Co. $2. *The Village*, by Ernest Poole. Macmillan Co. $1.50. *The Eclipse of Russia*, by E. J. Dillon. Doran. $4. *The Russian Revolution*, by A. Petrunkevitch. S. N. Harper and F. A. Golder. Harvard University Press, Cambridge. $1. *Russia in Upheaval*, by Edward Alsworth Ross. Century Co. $2.50.