

# The Soviet Republic in Action

By W. T. Goode.

A bourgeois impression—From the "Manchester Guardian" (England).

MOSCOW was gray and dull. There was a quality of tension in the atmosphere which may have been due, I felt, to the presence of a strong government joined to an ignorance of the relation in which at any moment one might stand towards it.

For that it is a strong government is beyond dispute. The idea that it is composed of men who forced themselves into offices for which they were entirely unfit seems to me, after months of experience among them, quite outside the truth. The eighteen commissaires, or ministers, are men of unusual intelligence—in some cases of high technical qualifications. And however they have been chosen they were well chosen.

Lenine himself, whatever opinion may be held on his ideas, is by way of being a political genius. Krassin, commissaire for transports, is a highly qualified technician and was formerly manager for all the Russias of the Siemens-Schuckert Company. His organizing powers are undoubted.

Lunacharsky, commissaire of education, is a man in love with his work and one who has that rare quality in an educational reformer—vision—and he labors to materialize his vision.

Milutin, commissaire of industries, is professor of economics at Moscow university. Kurski, commissaire of justice, is a local lawyer. In Tomski and Melnichansky of the professional unions; Dr. Semas-sko, state hygiene; Mrs. Lebedev, doctor of medicine of the maternity branch of the commissariat on social maintenance, and Siderski of food control, not to mention others, the government has people of solid ability, great experience and considerable powers for work.

## Marvelous Power for Work.

The commissaires of the people form real executives and they are men of grip. They recoil from no act which they consider justifiable in the interests of the government. And here is, I think, one of the secrets of their power. Another is their capacity for work. The stories of orgies and of self-seeking are quite false. A London clerk lives better than they do. Their lives are simple, their habits and dress equally so (I saw only one of them who was at all well dressed), and the reality is a life of work to which a convict's task is child's play.

They bear marks of the strain under which they live. I do not know what is the average number of hours worked daily by the commissaires, but one of them worked regularly from lunch time to 3 or 4 o'clock a. m. and has never been known to go out to breathe the fresh air; another takes only five hours sleep; still another less.

I mention this only to show the character of the men who are in the forefront of Bolshevism, and to put down coldly my own experience with them. But even these men could not hold their own without a good organization to back them. This they have. And the western world should realize that politically and administratively the organization is strong and complete.

The commissariats or ministries are well housed, elaborately organized and highly staffed.

Numbers of the bourgeois and former functionaries are employed, and at first one of the greatest dangers and difficulties was the amount of sabotage experienced. But this was dealt with ruthlessly and sabotage

was made one of the crimes answerable to a revolutionary tribunal—the extraordinary commission.

The head and front of the whole organization is supplied by pure Socialists—Communists—who have a party organization of their own to which the leaders belong. Its discipline, self imposed, is complete and unique and is rigidly observed. When called upon for some duty, however distasteful, the professed Communist must obey without hesitation. At times even the leaders are ordered off into the country to some part where propaganda, explanation or justification is needed, and they go.

## Punishment to Fit Responsibility.

In cases where some lapse occurs—bribery or lawbreaking—if the offender be a non-Communist, he is punished with prison; if a Communist, he is shot as a traitor to his principles. It will be seen, then, that the Communists form the spearhead of Bolshevism and are a formidable weapon.

But for supervision of the whole organization of government there has been set up a department of state control, which deserves a brief description. It is subdivided and covers the whole administration, concerning itself only with officials, not with private persons, and its powers extend to all departments, to the chief executive committee, even to the commissaires of the people. It controls the finances and budget. It is capable of compelling departments to improve their work, and has authority to stop overlapping of departments and duplication of work. It has suppressed departments as unnecessary. If an official does work that is unsatisfactory, it can recommend his removal, and it can and does prosecute incompetent or sinning officials.

## Instructs While It Governs.

And not only does it control; it also in-

structs, and sends down officials to teach those in provincial town or local soviets.

One of the greatest difficulties experienced by the Bolsheviki has been in finding competent officials for Soviets in the country. They found themselves up against the besetting sin of old bureaucracy, and they themselves trace many of their errors to the character of the men they employed at first. But they have set out to supply themselves with more reliable elements.

In the palatial club of Moscow merchants they have established a school of soviet workers, with 700 students drawn from all parts of Russia by the local soviets, whose expenses are paid, and a course of four months provided in matters relating to local government.

A test has to be passed at the close of the course, and when it is remembered that these 700 can be turned out three times a year, the influence of such a move can be understood. In addition, in the same school the Communist Party maintains a special course for 600 students, drawn from the provinces, mostly peasants, in the methods of propaganda applied to the middle class peasants.

I stayed long in the great hall where lectures and discussions went on, and I can testify to the deadly earnestness of the crowd of students. They were mostly young and of both sexes, and the lecturer to whom I listened held them easily and initiated and conducted the discussion with admirable sureness.

The idea of this school is an extension of the idea of propaganda, which is one of the great weapons of the Bolsheviki. It is all-embracing and constant. I have spoken of monuments, but that is only an infinitesimal portion of the program. A constant stream of pamphlets pours out, the people are spoken to in their own language, often with great skill.

Posters are found everywhere, and there are special shops for their display. Many are crude in conception and execution, but others are striking and effective, and all appeal strongly to the eye.

## "All is Quiet in Berlin!"

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forward surging militant energy of the masses encountered an insufficient maturity of historic pre-requisites or was it the result of the revolutionary action being paralyzed by halfheartedness, indecision and internal weakness?

Classic examples of both cases are, on the one hand, the French February revolution, and, on the other, the German March revolution (1848). The heroic deeds of the Paris proletariat in 1848 became a living fountain of class energy for the entire world proletariat. The lifelessness of the German March revolution is in accord with the whole direction of modern German development. Its stagnant influence was apparent during the entire history of the official German Social-Democracy till the last events of the German revolution, the most recent tragic crisis.

What does the defeat of the so-called "Spartacan week" signify from the standpoint of the above-mentioned historic law? Was it a defeat born from the violent revolutionary energy encountering an insufficient maturity of existing conditions, or was

it the result of feebleness and half-heartedness?

Both. The double character of this crisis, the contradiction between the powerful, determined militant aggressiveness of the Berlin mass and the hesitation, tardiness and halfheartedness of the Berlin leaders, represents a distinct characteristic feature of the last episode.

The leaders failed to rise to the occasion. But leaders can and must be created by the masses themselves and from the ranks of the masses. For the masses are the determining element, they are the rock upon which will rest the final victory of the revolution. The masses were at their best, they have transformed their "defeat" into a link of those historic defeats which form the pride and strength of world Socialism. And therefore from the defeat will blossom forth the future victory. "All is quiet in Berlin." You stupid lackeys! Your tranquility is based on quicksand. To-morrow again the Revolution will rise to the heights, and, in trumpet tones horrifying you, it will declare:

I was. I am. I shall be.