

narin, the editor of "Pravda" and one of the most interesting talkers in Moscow, who is ready to discuss any philosophy you like, from Berkeley and Locke down to Bergson and William James, trotted up and shook hands. Suddenly a most unexpected figure limped through the door. This was the lame Eliava of the Vologda Soviet, who came up in great surprise at seeing me again, and reminded me how Radek and I, hungry from Moscow, astonished the hotel of the Golden Anchor by eating fifteen eggs apiece, when we came to Vologda last Summer (I acted as translator during Radek's conversations with the American Ambassador and Mr. Lindley). Eliava is a fine, honest fellow, and had a very difficult time in Vologda, where the large colony of foreign embassies and missions naturally became the centre of disaffection in a district which at the time was full of inflammable material. I remember when we parted from him, Radek said to me that he hardly thought he would see him alive again. He told me he had left Vologda some three months ago and was now going to Turkestan. He did not disguise the resentment he felt towards M. Nouvens (the French Ambassador), who, he thought, had stood in the way of agreement last year, but said that he had nothing whatever to say against Lindley.

At last there was a little stir in the raised præsidium, and the meeting began. When I saw the lean, long-haired Avanesov take his place as secretary, and Sverdlov, the president, lean forward a little, ring his bell, and announce that the meeting was open and that "Comrade Chicherin has the word," I could hardly believe that I had been away six months.

Chicherin's speech took the form of a general report on the international situation. He spoke a little more clearly than he was used to do, but even so I had to walk round to a place close under the tribune before I could hear him. He sketched the history of the various steps the Soviet Government has taken in trying to secure peace, even including such minor "peace offensive" as Litvinov's personal telegram to President Wilson. He then weighed, in no very hopeful spirit, the possibilities of this last Note to all the Allies having any serious result. He estimated the opposing tendencies for and against war with Russia in each of the principal countries concerned. The growth of revolutionary feeling abroad made imperialistic governments even more aggressive towards the Workers' and Peasants' Republic than they would otherwise be. It was now making their intervention difficult, but no more. It was impossible to say that the collapse of Imperialism had gone so far that it had lost its teeth. Chicherin speaks as if he were a dead man or a ventriloquist's lay figure. And indeed he is half-dead. He has never learnt the art of releasing himself from drudgery by handing it over to his subordinates. He is permanently tired out. You feel it is almost cruel to say "Good morning" to him when you meet him, because of the appeal to be left alone that comes unconsciously into his eyes. Partly in order to avoid people, partly because he is himself accustomed to work at night, his section of the Foreign Office keeps extraordinary hours, is not to be found till about five in the afternoon and works till four in the morning. The actual material of his report was interesting, and while through it the audience listened with attention it only woke into real animation when with a shout of laughter it heard an address sent to Clemenceau by the emigre financiers, aristocrats and bankrupt politicians of the Russian colony in Stockholm, protesting against any sort of agreement with the Bolsheviks.

Bucharin followed Chicherin. A little eager

figure in his neat brown clothes (bought, I think, while visiting Berlin as a member of the Economic Commission), he at least makes himself clearly heard, though his voice has a funny tendency to breaking. He compared the present situation with the situation before Brest. He had himself (as I well remember) been, with Radek, one of the most violent opponents of the Brest peace, and he now admitted that at that time Lenin had been right and he wrong. The position was now different, because whereas then Imperialism was split into two camps fighting each other, it now showed signs of uniting its forces. He regarded the League of Nations as a sort of capitalist syndicate, and said that the difference in the French and American attitude towards the League depended upon the position of French and American capital. Capital in France was so weak, that she could at best be only a small shareholder. Capital in America was in a very advantageous position. America therefore wanted a huge All-European syndicate in which each state would have a certain number of shares. America, having the greatest number of shares, would be able to exploit all the other nations. This is a fixed idea of Bucharin's, and he has lost no opportunity of putting out this theory of the League of Nations since the middle of last summer. As for Chicherin's Note, he said it had at least great historical interest on account of the language it used, which was very different from the hypocritical language of ordinary diplomacy. Here were no phrases about noble motives, but a plain recognition of the facts of the case. "Tell us what you want," it says, "and we are ready to buy you off, in order to avoid armed conflict." Even if the Allies gave no answer the Note would still have served a useful purpose and would be a landmark in history.

Litvinov followed Bucharin. A solid, jolly, round man, with his peaked grey fur hat on his head, rounder than ever in fur-collared, thick coat, his eye-glasses slipping from his nose as he got up, his grey muffler hanging from his neck, he hurried to the tribune. Taking off his things and leaving them on a chair below, he stepped up into the tribune with his hair all rumpled, a look of extreme seriousness on his face, and spoke with a voice whose capacity and strength astonished me who had not heard him speak in public before. He spoke very well, with more sequence than Bucharin, and much vitality, and gave his summary of the position abroad. He said (and Lenin expressed the same view to me afterwards) that the hostility of different countries to Soviet Russia varied in direct proportion to their fear of revolution at home. Thus France, whose capital had suffered most in the war and was weakest, was the most un-

compromising, while America, whose capital was in a good position, was ready for agreement. England, with rather less confidence, he thought was ready to follow America. Need of raw material was the motive tending towards agreement with Russia. Fear that the mere existence of Labor Government anywhere in the world strengthens the revolutionary movement elsewhere, was the motive for the desire to wipe out the Soviet at all cost. Chicherin's note, he thought, would emphasize the difference between these opposing views and would tend to make impossible an alliance of the capitalists against Russia.

Finally, Kamenev, now President of the Moscow Soviet, spoke, objecting to Bucharin's comparison of the peace now sought with that of Brest Litovsk. Then everything was in a state of experiment and untried. Now it was clear to the world that the unity of Russia could be achieved only under the Soviets. The power opposed to them could not but recognize this fact. Some parts of Russia (Ukraine) had during the last fifteen months experienced every kind of government, from the Soviets, the dictatorship of the proletariat, to the dictatorship of foreign invaders and the dictatorship of a General of the old regime, and they had after all returned to the Soviets. Western European imperialists must realize that the only Government in Russia which rested on the popular masses was the Government of the Soviets and no other. Even the paper of the Mensheviks, commenting on Chicherin's note, had declared that by this step the Soviet Government had shown that it was actually a national Government acting in the interests of the nation. He further read a statement by Right Social Revolutionaries (delegates of that group, members of the Constituent Assembly, were in the gallery) to the effect that they were prepared to help the Soviet Government as the only Government in Russia that was fighting against a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.

Finally, the Committee unanimously passed a resolution approving every step taken in trying to obtain peace, and at the same time "sending a fraternal greeting to the Red Army of workers and peasants engaged in ensuring the independence of Soviet Russia." The meeting then turned to talk of other things.

I felt, rather miserable to think how little I had foreseen when Soviet Russia was compelled last year to sign an oppressive peace with Germany, that the time would come when they would be trying to buy peace from ourselves. As I went out I saw another unhappy figure, unhappy for quite different reasons. Angelica Balabanova, after dreaming all her life of Socialism in the most fervent Utopian spirit, had come at last to Russia to find that a Socialist state was faced with difficulties at least as real as those which confront other states, that in the battle there was little sentiment and much cynicism and that dreams worked out in terms of humanity in the face of the opposition of the whole of the rest of the world are not easily recognized by their dreamers.

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at EASTERN BOULEVARD PARK
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Vladimir Resnikoff, Russian Singer
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