

WILLIAM Z. FOSTER



IN SOVIET RUSSIA



(Editor's Note:—This is the fifth of Mr. Foster's specially written articles for The Federated Press on conditions in Russia as he finds them. Earlier dispatches recounted the rejuvenation in society which the revolution brought about.)

By WILLIAM Z. FOSTER, Federated Press Staff Writer.
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Moscow.—In order to convey an idea of the events and forces leading up to the formation of the famous Russian revolutionary Red Army, it may be well for us to start at the breakup of the Czar's army. Already, before the February, 1917, or "first" revolution, this enormous military machine was disintegrating. Rebellious and weary of the ruinous imperialist war, the workers and peasants were deserting by tens of thousands. And with the downfall of the Czar's government this disintegration was tremendously hastened. Although Kerensky's government attempted to hold it together and to make it fight, the old army melted away like snow before an April sun. Millions of soldiers quit it, taking with them what equipment they could carry. This collapse ended Kerensky's ambitious war plans and finally sealed his doom.

The journey homeward of these many millions of soldiers, suddenly freed from the army, was one of the most striking events in history. Multitudes of them had to walk as much as four or five thousand miles back to their villages, living on the way no man knows how. The railroads were choked beyond belief with them. When a train departed it would be literally packed with humanity, inside, outside, top and bottom; every place where a human being could hang on had its occupants. Large numbers were killed, often the overcrowded car-roofs caved in and crushed those packed like sardines below, hundreds were swept off the trains by the bridges and tunnels. The whole thing was a terrible nightmare.

With the old army rapidly dissolving a pressing need arose for a defense force to preserve order and to protect the revolution from imperialistic counter-revolutionists. Consequently the famous Red Guard sprang into existence. This was a loosely constructed organization, consisting for the most part of detachments of workers recruited in the various shops and factories of the big industrial centres, together with a few remnants of the old army.

Despite its lack of numbers, organization, equipment and discipline, the Red Guard served its purpose well, covering itself with glory in many a hard-fought fight. Its sympathies were altogether with the working-class, and it went hand in hand with the Bolsheviki in overthrowing the Kerensky government in the "second" revolution of October, 1917.

Hardly was the present Soviet government in power when it perceived and set about remedying the inadequacy of the weak Red Guard. The whole capitalist world was arrayed against Russia. Terrific struggles were surely ahead; and in order to survive them a great, powerful military machine had to be created. Plans were made for the Red Army—an organization entirely distinct from the old Red Guard—and their carrying out entrusted to the remarkable Peoples' Commissioner for War, Leon Trotsky.

Tremendous problems confronted the organizers of the new Red Army—military experts the world over declared the whole proposition impossible. We can mention only a very few of these problems. One was the question of compulsory military service. Due to their bitter experiences with imperialistic militarism, the Russian people had gained a deep hatred of conscription. Hence the Red Guard was founded upon the volunteer system. But this did not work well. The war-weary people were tired of fighting and the burden of the struggle fell upon the best and most militant elements of the city workers. Russia was slaughtering off her most precious mechanics and industrial workers (a loss from which she is now suffering severely), while the slacker elements either stayed aloof from the army altogether, or, having joined it, would leave in a few weeks time, fed up, with good clothes on their backs, and rifles in their hands.

Under such conditions it was manifestly impossible to build a real fighting force. Nor did the Russian leaders hesitate before the obvious remedy. Even as American trade unionists, by setting up compulsory systems of dues, obedience to strike votes, etc. (our movement would be impossible if it depended upon the volunteer system in these matters), practically compel the ignorant and indifferent workers to fight intelligently and vigorously in their own behalf, so the Russian worker military organizers, proceeding upon identical principles, found it necessary to institute discipline in order to enlist the backward masses

in the vital task of defending the revolution. With the united support of the trade unions they introduced compulsory military service. They recognized, and so did the great mass of toilers, that there is a world of difference between conscription to defend your master's interests and conscription to defend your own. Hence the Red Army was founded upon compulsory service. Only workers and poor peasants are allowed to become real soldiers; the sons of rich peasants and of doubtful city elements are kept at laboring work about the camps.

(Continued next week.)

SOME STATISTICS.

By TOM CLARK.

There are statistics and statistics. Here are also some. Nearly 20 leading railways show that the number of stockholders increased from 433,621 in 1919 to 467,368 in 1920 and 509,503 in 1921. The American Telephone Co. has increased its number of stockholders more than 100,000 in ten years, in other words to 138,699. The United States Steel Corporation has 104,376 stockholders, 75 per cent of the stock being held by investors. 50 leading industrials show an increase from 643,362 in 1919 to 868,183 this year.

The country is getting rich. Wealth is spreading. Workers are joining the ranks of the capitalists—co-operation they call it. YOU work for the concern, and the concern works you. Or as a well known paper said: "In not a few cases, thousands of wage earners hold among them thousands of shares of the companies which employ them," which means an average of about a share a piece.

What a feeling of pride the worker has as a stockholder in the company for which he works. Of course, working "for himself" (as one of the stockholders) he works like a mule. The company generally advances the money to buy the stock, deducting a payment every week. If, for any reason whatever, they kick him out, he loses all right to this privilege. Hence, in view of these wonderful "privileges", he becomes a pliable, humble slave, as a stockholder. No union for him: his interests are the company's interests! No decent hours for him: the longer he works, the bigger the earnings of the company and the higher his dividend! No thought of violence on his part: that would signify destruction of "his" property!

In spite of the seduction of this method, but a small number of workers can and do accept shareholding in the companies they work for. Why? Because they can't afford the weekly deduction from their pay; secondly, because most of them see through the trickery of it. They see that the bosses offer them this participation in the earnings of the company in order to drive them on to greater production—the value of which goes chiefly into the pockets of the bosses.

There are some other statistics. There are nearly 5,000,000 jobless and wages are dropping, some to below the pre-war level. Are the jobless and pre-war wage earners among the holders of these shares?

The transportation census of Petrograd on July 1 showed transportation resources of 3,500 Soviet horses, 2,772 army horses, 6,055 private horses and 90,961 horses in the Petrograd district. There were 743 motor trucks and 11 cars in the district. Further available means of transportation in Petrograd were 7,730 bicycles and 180 motorcycles. There were 1,660 motor cars resting in the Petrograd "auto cemetery," mostly requiring minor repairs, without repair shops.

BILL BONEHEAD AND HIS

IF YOU TRY TO PULL
DOWN THE REINS
OF GOVERNMENT
AND OVERTHROW
ME I'LL CALL
YOU A DANGEROUS
BOLSHEVIKI

