

RUSSIA IS NEARING CRISIS BY HUNGER

Industrial and Economic Leaders Only Hope of Avoiding Internal Upheaval.

NEEDS MANY AND VARIED

Moving Pictures Declared Bad and Expensive, Sanitation of Public Buildings Poor and Soda Fountain Would Be Boon.

BY RHETA CHILDE DORN.
(Nineteenth of a series of articles telling the inside story of Russia's revolt. Copyright, 1917, by the New York Evening Mail. Published by arrangement.)

It would be a very terrible thing for democracy and the world's peace if the allies, observing the anarchy into which Russia has fallen, should relax any of their efforts to help her back to a sound military, economic and social foundation. The first impulse is to refuse to loan money to such an unstable government and even to decline to send foodstuffs to a people who will not try to help themselves. But second thought reveals the unwelcome fact that Russia is rapidly approaching the climax of her war.

We must loan money to Russia even though we lose the money. We must send her food and supplies even though they are received without much gratitude. For the sake of democracy, to which Russia is a world to contribute, we must help her now. The task will not be as difficult as this appears to be, for Russia is rapidly approaching the climax of her war.

Bankruptcy Declared Near.

Aside from her military situation, bankruptcy is near. Bankruptcy for the national treasury, for few taxes are being paid. Bankruptcy for food, clothing, fuel for all the people except a few on the farms, and even they will suffer for many things. Hunger and cold are at the door. The Russian army may rally, may turn on the Germans and magnificently retrieve its lost reputation as a fighting force. But there is no way in which the army of producers, the farmers and the working people, can rout the enemy they have admitted within the lines.

The farmer class of Russia this year did not produce full crops, and they refused to send to market a very large proportion of their produce. They hoarded their grain for their own use and some of it at least they have turned into vodka. In the towns and cities of Russia production almost stopped, but the peasant very quickly learned the art of illicit distilling, and I heard on authority I could scarcely question that stills have been established in half the villages of Russia.

The statement is borne out to some extent by the fact that drunkenness among soldiers is increasing, especially in places remote from the larger cities. In Petrograd I saw little drunkenness, but the farther I traveled southward into the farming area the more I saw and heard of it. At the military position in Poland where the Bukovina Battalion of Dead was stationed, I talked with a soldier who had lived in America. In the course of one conversation he mentioned that he and two of his regiment had got drunk and were in trouble.

"Where could they get liquor?" I asked.

"Oh, they get it," he replied. "It's new and it's quite horrible, but they drink it."

Serious as the grain shortage is, the transportation situation is still more serious. Food for which Petrograd and Moscow would pay almost any money price on the ground spoils in the half-loaded freight cars, and wastes in congested way stations for lack of transportation facilities and for lack of labor.

In the industrial world things are as bad. The working people, blind to their own peril, have shortened hours of work, have gone slack on their jobs and have voted themselves wages far in excess of their productive activities. The consequences are rapidly accumulating. Factories are closing down, partly because they cannot get coal and partly because of the extortion of labor. The working people will know what it is to go hungry with their pockets full of money.

When these troubles culminate—and in February and March, 1918, the world will stand aghast at Russia's state—the only of the Bolsheviks, the riot of the dreamers, will end. Human nature is the same in Russia as it is elsewhere, the same as it is in New York or in Emporia, Kansas.

What Russia needs above all other things is leaders. What the people of this country must do for Russia is to help her find and develop those leaders. They are there somewhere. Russia has shown that she can produce great men and great women, people whom any nation might be proud to follow. But under Czarism the only people permitted to lead were so corrupt, so reactionary and tyrannical that the Russians learned to fear and distrust all leadership. When they overthrew Czarism and banished the tyrants and the corrupt leaders, they thought they could get along without any leaders. The world knows now how fatal was their mistake, and very soon the blindest of the blind in Russia will know it.

Russia needs not only political leaders, she needs even more urgently leaders in the economic field.

Nobody needs a slave under leaders responsible and removable at will. We were in the United States until we got our eyes a little open. We sink back once in a while still. Witness some of our municipal governments. But freedom under strong leadership is entirely possible. In fact, it is the only real freedom there is in the world.

School System Essential.

The Russians may have a difficult time achieving it, for they are not quite the hard-fibered, ambitious, struggling race the English, French and Americans are. They are fatalistic and dreamy. That is the reason they endured their autocrats so long. But in the end they will achieve it.

The village of Dniepropetrovsk and here again America must show her way. A public school system on the best lines we have been able to develop would mean the Russian people in one generation. Ninety per cent of the present population is illiterate. The old government tried to keep the past ten years to extend the common schools, but with little effect on illiteracy. The mass of the children were given the best of education with the object of teaching them at least to read and write. Most of them barely learned and practically all forgot before they were old enough to use their tiny bit of knowledge.

Russia needs schools to teach children knowledge and she needs libraries very near if not directly attached to the schools. I talked to many people about this, and the wonderful Gary schools in which children work steadily and play their way to fine, strong, thinking manhood and womanhood, and in every case the response was the same. "We must have schools like that all over Russia. Will you help us when the time comes to organize them?"

Plumbers Are Wanted.

They cannot hope to go to once into all the intensive work of the Gary public school system, but they can adopt its general principles and its duplicate use of the school plant. In this way they will be able to educate more children in each schoolhouse and thus hasten the day when the children will be in school. William Wirt's next great work may be organizing school systems in new Russia. Having no old system to replace, he will not meet with the stupid and criminal obstruction and opposition with which his labors in New York have been beset.

Russia needs wholesome popular amusements to entertain and instruct her adult population. If I were to write a dozen lists of things which Russia needs I should place near the head of the list plumbers and moving picture companies. The people in the dark ages as far as building sanitation is concerned. That is no small thing, because it affects both the health and the morale of a people. It affects the manners also, as anyone who ever had to enter the lavatory of a Russian railroad carriage or station can testify.

They have some moving picture theaters in Russia, but they are poor in performance and frightfully high priced. You pay as much to go to the movies in Russia as you pay to hear a high-class symphony concert. I never heard of a moving picture theater in Russia, but I heard of a picture house, no could I learn that they existed anywhere in the empire.

Mrs. Fankhurst and I went to the movies one night, paying something like \$1.50 for our seats. The play was a long, dreary drama, ending in suicide and general misery. The acting was poor and the actors old and elderly. For current events pictures they presented the Cosack funeral, reeled off very dry and that they looked less like a funeral than an automobile race.

Soda Fountain Would Be Boon.

Another thing Russia needs is a soda fountain. A cold soft drink in summer and a hot chocolate in winter is accessible and cheap, would do more to take Ivan's mind off moonshining vodka than all the laws in the world. Last summer there were times when I would cheerfully have given \$1 for a frosty glass of soda, any kind, any flavor, and when I was with plenty of others in Petrograd of my mind.

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