

INSIDE THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

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Inside the Russian Revolution by Rheta Childe Dorr

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RHETA CHILDE DORR

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Catherine Breshkovskaja, the "Little Grandmother of the Russian Revolution."

CALIFORNIA

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BY
RHETA CHILDE DORR

ILLUSTRATED



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CHAPTER I

TOPSY-TURVY LAND

EARLY in May, 1917, I went to Russia, eager to see again, in the hour of her deliverance, a country in whose struggle for freedom I had, for a dozen years, been deeply interested. I went to Russia a socialist by conviction, an ardent sympathizer with revolution, having known personally some of the brave men and women who suffered imprisonment and exile after the failure of the uprising in 1905-6. I returned from Russia with the very clear conviction that the world will have to wait awhile before it can establish any coöperative millenniums, or before it can safely hand over the work of government to the man in the street.

All my life I have been an admiring student of the French revolution, and I have fervently wished that I might have lived in the Paris of that time, to witness, even as a humble spectator, the downfall of autocracy and the birth of a people's liberty. Well—I lived for three months in the capital of revolu-

tionary Russia. I saw a revolution which presents close parallels with the French revolution both in men and events. I saw the downfall of autocracy and the birth of liberty much greater than the French ever aspired to. I saw the fondest dream of the socialists suddenly come true, and the dream turned out to be a nightmare such as I pray that this or any country may forever be spared.

I saw a people delivered from one class tyranny deliberately hasten to establish another, quite as brutal and as unmindful of the common good as the old one. I saw these people, led out of groaning bondage, use their first liberty to oust the wise and courageous statesmen who had delivered them. I saw a working class which had been oppressed under czarism itself turn oppressor; an army that had been starved and betrayed use its freedom to starve and betray its own people. I saw elected delegates to the people's councils turn into sneak thieves and looters. I saw law and order and decency and all regard for human life or human rights set aside, and I saw responsible statesmen in power allow all this to go on, allow their country to rush toward an abyss of ruin and shame because they were afraid to lose popularity with the mob.

The government was so afraid of losing the support of the mob that it permitted the country to be overrun by German agents posing as socialists. These agents spent fortunes in the separate peace propaganda alone. They demoralized the army, corrupted the workers in field and factories, and put machine guns in the hands of fanatical dreamers, sending them out into the streets