

**THROUGH
BOLSHEVIK RUSSIA**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649721658

Through Bolshevik Russia by Mrs. Philip Snowden

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
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BY
MRS. PHILIP SNOWDEN

Dept. of
CALIFORNIA

CASSELL AND COMPANY, LTD
London, New York, Toronto and Melbourne
1920

U. S. P.

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INTRODUCTION

I HAVE written these impressions of Bolshevik Russia with the object of promoting peace with that great country, by adding the evidence to that already given in numerous articles and books of one more eye-witness of the terrible sufferings of the Russian people.

I paid a six weeks' visit to Russia as a member of the Delegation chosen by the Executive Committee of the Labour party and of the Trades Union Congress, in fulfilment of a resolution passed by a special Trade Union Congress held on December 10th, 1919, which demanded of the British Government "the right to an independent and impartial enquiry into the industrial, economic and political conditions of Russia."

So much about Russia that was contradictory had appeared in the newspaper press, with the balance of statement on the side of evil report, that it was increasingly felt by the organised workers of Great Britain the truth must at all costs be discovered, if that were possible, by investigators selected by themselves.

In addition, it was thought right and wise to

discover if there existed anything in the behaviour of the Russian Government and people so menacing to ourselves as to warrant the attacks upon Russia of foreign Governments, including our own. We did not believe that any possible conduct of the Government of Russia could justify the supply of British men, arms and money to Russia's enemies; and we have returned unanimously confirmed in that judgment, convinced that Russian internal affairs are her own business and not ours.

The Delegation left Newcastle on April 27th, and travelled by Christiania, Stockholm and Reval. We returned to England on June 30th.

Wherever we went we discovered the greatest interest in our mission. We came in contact with representatives of the Socialist and Labour movement in all the towns through which we passed. In Christiania we found that the Labour party had so far expressed its approval of the doings in Moscow as to have applied for membership of the Third International, that great symbol of Communism, and the international organ through which the Communists propose to work for world-revolution.

In applying for this membership, the Norwegian party made two important reservations: It wished to leave its members free on the point of armed revolution, and it insisted on equality

of voting power for peasant and artisan. No reply had been received from Moscow at the time of our visit. I afterwards discovered in Moscow a sternly unrelenting attitude on the question of revolution by violence.

In Stockholm the great bulk of the Labour movement is against Bolshevism, although a small section approves it. We behaved with strict impartiality to both kinds, and received and gave hospitality indiscriminately.

The same story was repeated at Reval. And in common fairness to the Bolsheviki it must be admitted that they have a grievance against the Moderates of Reval as great as any grievance the Moderates may have against them. They appear to attack each other with equal ferocity.

I have not attempted in these pages to argue right down to the last syllable any one of the great questions which are pivotal to modern political controversies. Other writers have done that, or will do it. Russian Communist literature circulates abundantly in this country for all those whose interest in the Russian experiment lies deep. I have sought only to give a series of pen-pictures of Russian life under the Bolsheviki, and to state interesting facts about that small piece of mighty Russia which it was my great privilege to see. In choosing to do this I shall have satisfied neither of the two sorts

Introduction

of extremist, who will, without doubt, quote my sentences in defence of the Red and the White.

A friend said to me in discussing the question that there was an explosive quality in the word *Bolshevism* which caused it to be popular with those who wished to destroy some hated thing. Such a word as *aneurism* could not be employed with one-tenth of the effect; but Bolshevism! The word is a veritable bomb when exploded in the ears of the timid and conventional.

The simple fact of the matter is, that in regard to Bolshevism, as in other matters, the truth lies between the two extremes of statement. What is being said and done in Russia is neither perfectly good nor wholly bad. The same with the men and women themselves. They are creatures very much like ourselves, who are called upon to deal with a situation which is extremely difficult, and who are dealing with it in the way which to them seems best. They have made mistakes, some of these very big mistakes. But Lenin and some of the others have had the courage to admit this. There is abundant hope for a country whose rulers know when they are mistaken and are willing to adapt themselves and to try again. If this sensible type of governor has less power than the other at the moment, it will not always be so. Much depends upon the conduct of the outer world.