

# WILLIAM Z. FOSTER

## IN SOVIET RUSSIA

(Editor's Note:—The following is the sixth of a series of special articles on conditions in Russia which Mr. Foster was commissioned by The Federated Press to write. He already has described the constitution of the workers' republic and some of the problems the Red army was called upon to face in its role of defender of Soviet principles.)

By WILLIAM Z. FOSTER, Federated Press Staff Writer.  
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MOSCOW.—Another grave problem which the Red Army had to face was the system of army control and command. In the Czar's army extreme bitterness existed between the officers and the rank and file. The former, who were exclusively aristocrats and bourgeois, lost no occasion to tyrannize over the common soldier. Hence, when the revolution came, a natural demand of the soldiers was for the right to elect their own officers. This was granted, and the system introduced into the old army, and later on into the Red Guard after the former had disintegrated.

The effect was chaos and general demoralization. Discipline vanished and the military units degenerated into debating societies. Elections of officers and commanding committees followed each other in swift succession. There was no head or tail to anything. Orders would be given to a regiment, and then maybe a week later word would be sent to headquarters that after long consideration the regiment had decided that the orders were impractical and should not be obeyed. The efficiency of the armed forces as a fighting organization was reduced almost to zero.

The officers of the Red Army met this issue. They pointed out the weaknesses of the system of electing the officers by popular vote, and declared that although his measure was a perfectly natural demand in an imperialistic army where the ruling powers were against the soldiers it was altogether out of place in a democratic army where the government was composed of workers and bound to give the rank and file a square deal. Surely such a government could be entrusted to select the officers of the army. This view prevailed and the system of electing officers by the common soldiers was left out of the Red Army.

But where could the government secure the necessary officers? The workers themselves knew little or nothing of the complicated business of modern war. Large numbers of ex-Czarist officers were at hand, and many of them wanted to join the new army. But they could not be trusted and a violent prejudice existed against them. Finally, however, many of them were accepted and put at the heads of the troops. But their authority was limited to purely military matters. Side by side with them were placed Soviet Commissioners, who looked after the political work of the army. They attended to the education of the soldiers and made them understand what the revolution meant. They also saw to it that the decrees of the government were carried out and that the army was not used against the interests of the revolution. Ill fared the officers, indeed, who ventured to engage in treasonable activities.

The general plan was to exploit the knowledge of the old-time officers, but not to let them secure any real power. And so well was this done that the government has been able to educate large numbers of worker officers and to build up a reliable army command. The ruling class monopoly of military knowledge has been finally broken. Military experts declare that if this had not been done the workers could not have constructed an up-to-date army and carried on modern warfare.

And so it was with a whole maze of problems, many of them unique in military experience. The Red Army triumphed over all of them and was able to crushingly defeat Russia's

multitudinous enemies. In the United States we make much ado over the difficulties of the army in the American revolution, but, compared with the overwhelming obstacles that confronted the Red Army, its troubles were negligible. As it now stands the Red army is enormous in size and power. Just what its numbers are is not to be learned, but it is generally conceded to be the most powerful military organization in the world.

There is a studied effort being made by the enemies of Russia to make it appear that the Red Army is the same as other armies and has all their failings. But this is decidedly not the case. The Red Army is just as different from capitalistic armies as the Soviet government is different from capitalistic governments. It is pervaded throughout with a democratic spirit totally unknown in other military organizations. Between the officers and soldiers a feeling of brotherhood prevails, they dress exactly alike and address each other as "comrade." The Red Army is a people's army, defending the people's interests.

The Red Army is an organized crusade for the revolution. So militant and contagious is its proletarian spirit that its leaders can truthfully boast that "White" European troops cannot be used successfully against it. When faced by such soldiers the Red Army, in addition to its iron resistance, sets its great propaganda machine in operation. The prisoners captured are fed, entertained, educated and taken

## OUT OF THE DAY'S GRIND.

By KARL COHEN.

Of late a restless feeling seems to have gripped me. I am hunting for something, I don't know what, and am unable to find it. At my work in the car shops I peer inquisitively into the faces of the other workers. They are older than I, who am only a twenty-year-old apprentice, and perhaps I shall read in their faces the contentment which I seek. But outside mere humanness, that flash of animal good feeling which even the millionaire and the drunken sot share in common, there is nothing inspiring in their faces. The contrary in fact. I see selfishness, ignorance, deception and degradation. These are toothless old men in the carshops, tobacco chewing old cronies who are satisfied with the empty meaninglessness of their lives because they have childish minds and feeble bodies.

As I go home for lunch my quest continues. The girls of my own age have a stirring appeal for me as they smile and flirt in passing. They are pretty and flushed with bold confidence of youth. This, then, is what I have wanted. Real contentment can come from these beautiful girls who will transmit their radiant happiness to me. And yet I have tried this method before. There is something lacking in these creatures too. They are not deep. They lack intelligence; They are not frank and above board. If you would consort with them you must play to the galleries, must invest yourself in a glamour which you know you do not possess. All they require is external prettiness. I do not care—am too miserly of my energies, too lazy, to give them their price, emotional stimulation; diversion, amusement, for the coarse pseudo-happiness they would give me in return.

At evening I go with a literary acquaintance to a banquet of what he

## THE CONVICT

(July 1)

Toll the bell. Another crime is w  
Into the annals of a dying sta  
Two sons of Italy are doomed t  
Two sons of Labor in whose b  
Rebellion flamed  
Against a world of vice,  
Against the slavery of men,  
Have paid the price  
That all who dare will pay aga

One cried, "I'm innocent!"  
And one just paled  
And tragedy looked through his  
Perhaps he thought of those  
Who went before and failed—  
Yet won... Perhaps of sunlit  
Where he was wont to roam  
And dream the golden dreams  
Life, Liberty and the eternal q  
The State said they had killed  
These men—who are so far ab

about the country to see the proletarian institutions of Russia. Then they are returned to their own lines. Besides this, large quantities of literature are published and distributed to the enemy troops, pointing out to them how they are being duped by their masters and why they have no interest to carry on the war. Usually the result is not long in showing itself. Soon the enemy soldiers, most of whom, of course, are working men wake up to the true situation and refuse to fight their Russian brothers. This has been the case time after time. Not even American troops could withstand the Red Army propaganda as their revolt in Siberia proves.

All told, the Red Army is a remarkable institution and a fitting instrument to defend the great Russian revolution.

(Continued next week.)

calls middleclass intellectuals. These people interest me much. They do lack reason. And yet they make me feel distinctly an outsider. They notice my awkwardness in my Sunday suit. I am stamped with the seal of a worker. These people, socialists and liberals and what not can prate about uplift, but that does not fill the void in my heart. They are rich. They don't have to spend a monotonous ten hours a day in the car shops. They have artistically furnished homes which soothe their esthetic sense. No boarding house for them. They don't have to eat food that is akin to refuse, nor lick any bosses' boots, nor know the insecurity of hard times. They have nothing to do. Can it be that they but amuse themselves with these great social questions to fill the void in their existence?

Perhaps, in order to forget these faddists, it will do me good to go to a show. At least I shall see my own kind there. The audience like myself, will be there to seek refuge from the "dirty harbor of life." So at night I am seated in a vaudeville show. And what do I find here? Peace? Rest? No! All the diversified rottenness of life seems to have been dumped upon the stage. A man who looks like a prize fighter, in an untidy wrinkled suit, bellows forth a song about "Mother". (Pretty sentiment! Divine music! Yes—workingman's music and sentiment). A beauty chorus in patched tights sings a bathing song, the nearest the worker gets to art. A bloated faced couple, the woman fat and greasy, the man flippant and ungrammatical, bring out raw and disgusting jokes in their dialogue. An aristocrat would laugh at them; the workers laugh with them.

As I sit on the bed before retiring I wonder about myself. Slime is all around me. I don't seem to fit in. My companions in the shops, already