

BOOK REVIEWS

Revolution in the Making

THE HISTORY OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION, edited by Stalin, Molotov, Voroshilov, Gorki, Zhdanov, and Kirov. (Volume I of the History of the Civil War.) International Publishers. \$1.25.

THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION, by V. I. Lenin and Joseph Stalin. International Publishers. \$2.00.

BY the end of February 1917, the government of Nicholas II was still in the saddle. The weak parliament known as the State Duma dared criticize cabinet ministers only in whispers. The people were unorganized and had no appreciable political liberties. Millions of Russians rotted in the trenches on a thousand-mile front, while a handful of war profiteers were amassing fabulous fortunes. And dozens of minority nationalities groaned under the iron heel of oppression in the "prison of peoples."

By the end of November 1917, the autocratic government of Nicholas and the succeeding bourgeois-democratic government of Kerensky had been overthrown. Nicholas Romanov and his family had been executed, and Kerensky had fled abroad in disguise. The old state apparatus had been smashed and discarded, and state power was exercised with a profound consciousness of authority by a totally new agency—the councils of deputies of workers, soldiers, and peasants, known as Soviets. The lands of the large landowners, the crown, and the church had been confiscated and seized by the peasants. Workers' control had been established in the factories, as a step toward taking them over completely in the near future. The minority nationalities had been given full freedom. Huge masses of soldiers were moving from the trenches westward, homeward, while peace with Germany was about to be negotiated by the new government, the Council of People's Commissars.

By the end of February the Bolshevik (Communist) Party of Russia was still underground, numbering only a few thousand members. By the end of November it was heading millions of workers and scores of millions of peasants in the greatest revolution in history—greatest because it represented not only a change of the class that wields power, but a change in the ownership of the means of production, a transition into a new social system.

The span between February and November is packed with so many colossal events; the correlation of social forces undergoes transformations in such rapid succession; political events follow each other with such dizzy

speed; classes and parties reveal their inherent potentialities so clearly and fully; the whole social scene changes within such brief periods, that those who participated in the making of the history of that epoch themselves considered it little short of miraculous. In retrospect, after twenty years, these momentous months appear even more stirring in view of the survival of the revolution in face of numberless obstacles and in view of the completion of its primary task—the building of a Socialist system.

It is perhaps because of the vastness of scene and the material that no comprehensive history of the revolution has hitherto been written in the Soviet Union. There are numerous histories of the Communist Party, which also deal with the major facts of the revolution. There are mountains of monographs, tracts, articles on the various phases of the revolution. A mass of research work conducted by Soviet institutes has accumulated. There are a number of historical journals.

The History of the Civil War, however, is thus far the only publication giving a consecutive story of the revolution within the limits of a few volumes, of which the present is the first. The other volumes are still in preparation. The American publishers could have done the public no greater service than

to issue this translation of the book at a popular price.

The volume deals only with the events from February to the beginning of October, i.e., to the eve of the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks, but the reader gets a clear understanding of the forces and circumstances that made the October revolution inevitable and assured its success. The book is an outstanding example of how history should be written from the Marxian point of view. Its value is vouchsafed by the board of editors—Stalin, Molotov, Voroshilov, Gorki, Zhdanov, and Kirov.

The student of the history of the revolution would do well to read this volume concurrently with the other volume under review, *The Russian Revolution*, by Lenin and Stalin, which contains in chronological order many of the writings and speeches made by the leaders of the revolution from February to November. The latter book, complete in itself, will be better understood in the light of the facts narrated in *The History of the Civil War*. On the other hand, the reading of the works of Lenin and Stalin in connection with every turn of the revolution will make for a clearer understanding of the facts. While *The History of the Civil War* is a digest of the revolutionary events in retrospect, Lenin's and Stalin's writings are the revolution in the making. Both books form a unit, the like of which can seldom be found.

For Lenin and Stalin are not only students of the revolution; they are its makers at the head of the Communist Party and in closest contact with the masses. Their writings open the door, so to speak, to the very laboratory of the revolution.

The course is somewhat like this. First, a survey of a given situation is made by Lenin or Stalin separately or together; facts are carefully studied and data collected. Then theses are written, and a report is presented to the Bolshevik Party (conference or Central Committee) and a course of action is mapped out. After this follow a number of articles explaining the situation to the broad masses and urging them to accept the Bolshevik line, a line expressed in brief, crisp, and extremely lucid slogans. Because they express the interests of the masses and because, being based on the solid foundation of fact, they are tremendously convincing, these slogans are rapidly accepted by the masses and shape their actions. Lenin and Stalin give guidance to these actions.

One cannot escape the impression that many of the writings and speeches of Lenin and Stalin are prophetic. Lenin and Stalin see clearly the shape of things to come. Equipped with the Marxian analysis which they master more completely than anyone else, they forecast events on the basis of tendencies

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- New Fashions in Wage Theory*, by Jürgen Kuczynski. International. \$1.50.
- A History of the Businessman*, by Miriam Beard. Macmillan. \$5.
- Red Star over China*, by Edgar Snow. Random. \$3. (Book Union Selection for January.)
- America's Sixty Families*, by Ferdinand Lundberg. Vanguard. \$3.75.
- Two Wars and More to Come*, by Herbert L. Matthews. Carrick & Evans. \$2.50.
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- Old Hell*, by Emmett Gowen. Modern Age. Cloth, 85c. Paper, 25c.
- Madame Curie*, by Eve Curie. Translated by Vincent Sheean. Doubleday, Doran. \$3.50.
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- Young Henry of Navarre*, by Heinrich Mann. Knopf. \$3.
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and forces—and in no case do they prove incorrect. Having outlined a policy in conformity with a clearly foreseen development, they exhibit a fearlessness of which only great revolutionists are capable. Least of all are they afraid to change their slogans with the change of a situation. The slogan "All power to the Soviets" may serve as an adequate example.

In his April 3 theses Lenin had declared: "Not a parliamentary republic—to return to a parliamentary republic from the Soviets of Workers' Deputies would be a retrograde step—but a republic of Soviets of workers', agricultural laborers', and peasants' deputies throughout the country, from top to bottom." The slogan spread like wildfire. But then came the events of July 3-5, the demonstrations of the Petrograd workers, the suppression of the Bolshevik Party, the yielding of the Soviets, under the petty-bourgeois leadership of the Mensheviks and Social-Revolutionaries, to the pressure of the reactionary Provisional Government. Stalin then, in his report before the Sixth Congress of the Bolshevik Party, proposes to withdraw the slogan "All Power to the Soviets" because "*Strength* no longer lies in the Soviets." Stalin makes it clear that this does not mean "Down with the Soviets!" but that "the Soviets are not the only type of revolutionary organization" and that "the really decisive question is whether the working class is ripe for a dictatorship." The organizational forms which the revolution would assume, says Stalin, "will be brought about by the creativeness of the revolution." Soon, however, another change takes place. The Soviets are stiffening their resistance to the Provisional Government; they are turning to a revolutionary policy; many Soviets go Bolshevik. Stalin, in an article published September 17, declares: "*All power to the Soviets*—such is the slogan of the new movement," the reason being that "In the flames of the struggle the moribund Soviets are reviving. They are once again taking the helm and leading the revolutionary masses."

Throughout the whole volume runs the tremendous driving power of Lenin and Stalin, the breadth of their vision, the colossal sweep of their imagination, the flexibility of their tactics in conformity with concrete situations and in pursuance of the main objective, their abiding faith in the revolutionary spirit, understanding and creativeness of the masses, and their merciless struggle against false notions and false leaders, no matter what their position. As early as July 1917, Stalin, at the Sixth Congress of the Communist Party, defends the idea of the possibility of a Socialist revolution and of building Socialism in one country, Russia, against those who disbelieved in such a possibility. It was Preobrazhensky who proposed an amendment conditioning the capture of political power by the revolutionary classes on "the event of a proletarian revolution in the west," and it was Stalin who emphasized that "we must cast aside the obsolete idea that only Europe can show us the way." Significantly, Stalin added: "*There is*

dogmatic Marxism and creative Marxism. I stand on the basis of the latter." These words could be made a motto to all the work of Lenin and Stalin.

Lenin's and Stalin's struggles against the cowardly behavior of Zinoviev, Kamenev, Nogin, Rykov, Miliutov, and others who at the crucial moment of insurrection and seizure of power deserted the Party and violated the decisions of the Central Committee, is widely known. The volumes contain abundant proof that from the very outset these men were enemies of the revolution. "A serious betrayal"—this is how Lenin characterized Zinoviev's and Kamenev's actions on the eve of the uprising. "Strikebreakers" he called them. (Had he written in English he would have said "Scabs.")

One cannot refrain from quoting one passage from Lenin which fits the strikebreakers and betrayers of today perfectly. "A shrill pessimism" is what Lenin finds in these gentlemen. "Everything is well with the bourgeoisie and Kerensky; everything is wrong with us. The capitalists have everything wonderfully in hand; everything is wrong with the workers." In 1917 they ran to Kerensky, Kornilov, Brusilov, who planned the dictator-

ship of a czarist general; in 1932-1937 they ran to Hitler.

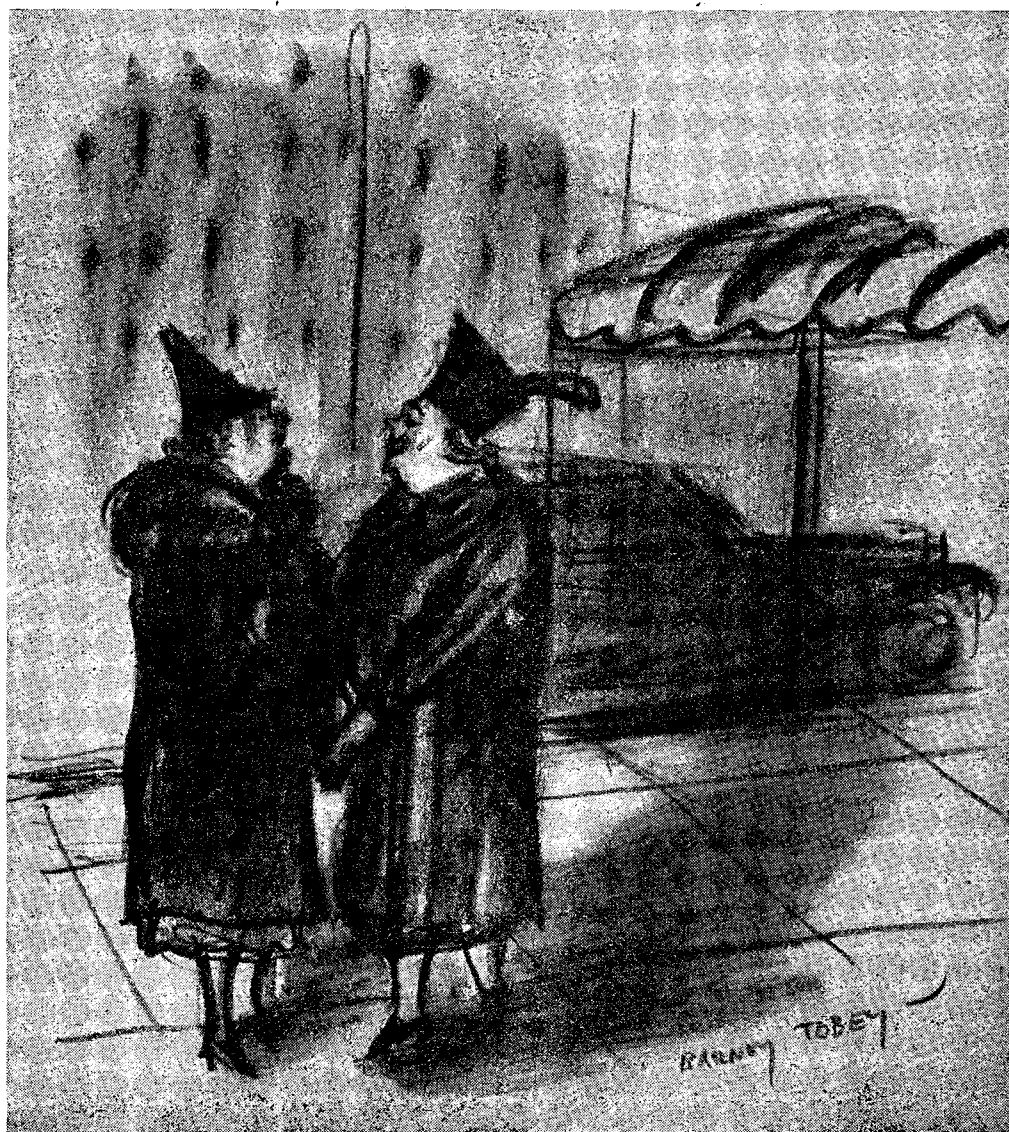
Like a clarion call rings Stalin's appeal of October 24, an appeal to seize power. "A new government must come into power, a government chosen by the Soviets, recallable by the Soviets, and responsible to the Soviets." We recognize the voice of the author of the 1937 constitution, the most democratic in the world.

MOISSAYE J. OLGIN.

Corrosive Without Corrective

THE FOLKLORE OF CAPITALISM, by Thurman W. Arnold. Yale University Press. \$3.

ARNOLD'S *The Folklore of Capitalism* is a continuation and amplification of his *The Symbols of Government*. Perhaps it is more profitably to be approached as a lexicon than as an argument. For it is attempting to chart some hitherto uncharted areas of speculation, particularly as to the relations between business and politics; and such attempts are necessarily more concerned with the rounding out of a point of view, suggesting a perspective



Barney Tobey

"But my dear—THIS Sinclair Lewis book is a NICE book."