for all our money and tax money and everything —then if banking is just to help farmers, we help ourselves and save town bankers the trouble. But if there's money can be made out of our money, banking it, we make it for ourselves. Ain't that true? But, of course, town folks don't like that. They want their own banks. They hate our bank, and they blame it for hard times and everything, so maybe they bust it up. It's in the Bible." She quoted freely and triumphantly:

"'Where a man's treasure is, there will his heart be also.'

"Course, I don't say I know about banking. But I can understand that. What it say in the Bible, that means everything about the League—our elevators and our mill and helping farmers market their stuff, and everything. We farm folks ain't much treasure, but we got more running things ourselves than helping the bankers and the grain men down by Minneapolis get rich. We stick by the League. But the town folks, they don't get so much treasure if we do things for ourselves, so they hate the League. Where your treasure is, there your heart is. You can't get back of the Bible. Jesus Christ understand folks."

"But all the farmers don't belong to the League, do they?" I asked.

Mrs. Johannissen snorted.

"Would there be any recall if the farmers stand together? Would there be any fuss at all? Nine folks in ten in North Dakota, they are farm folks. If they stand together, they can do what they want. But folks don't stand together like that. Some believes every lie they hear. Some owes money at the bank and can't make the banker mad in hard times. Some got bills at the store. Some owes for machinery or automobiles. There's more than one reason why every farmer ain't a Leaguer.

"But there's enough. You see, Missis. I tell you, wait and see. Enough of us got sense to stick. Me, I take one fourth what I get at market and give to the recall fund. Mrs. Mystrom, Mrs. Anderson, Mrs. Gjerstad—there's others doing the same. They try to kick the governor out. You wait and see. Enough of us farm folks got sense to stick.

"I got to get back now, Missis. I keep Mrs. Egge watching my stall already too long. Thanks very much for coffee."

I drove Mrs. Johannissen back to the market. She took her place among her clean, wholesome wares, and, as it was a slack time, she unfolded her Nonpartisan Leader. Her face was lined and heavy, her hands misshapen with the toil of a woman who has "raised" six children, and boarded the farm hands herself, even in threshing, and "never had help except two weeks when a baby come"; and who has "minded" the chickens and the calves, the churning and cooking and washing and ironing and scrubbing and sweeping and sewing and canning and gardening and sausage making and dishwashing and darning that goes on endlessly on prairie farms, from four in the morning till ten at night, till the weary days make a lifetime.

The vitality that has survived that bondage has lifted the Nonpartisan League from a political organization to a crusade. It is a crusade of faith and hope. So far, "town folks," even with the backing of city bankers and grain brokers, have not been able to check it.

BEULAH AMIDON RATLIFF.

The Russian Revolution Today

WHILE public interest seems to follow with more curiosity than compassion the progress of famine in Russia—a one-sided interest, indeed, since it unfalteringly assumes that the present political system lies at the bottom of any misery that may aggravate the life of that revolutionary land—it is, perhaps, not untimely to cast a glance at the general situation and to attempt a visualization of the stage which the proletarian dictatorship has reached at the end of its fourth year.

Three facts seem to mark the present phase of the revolution: an unslackening grip of the Communist party over the most varied affairs of the nation, a clearing of the way for a better understanding between the village and the industrial town, and an adaptation of the economic policy to a possible period of domestic peace and trade relations with the rest of the world. While the appalling impoverishment of the country sheds a lurid light under which every effort appears pathetically inadequate, while the elemental calamity of the famine throws a thick black streak across all plans and attempts, the general tendencies, however modified and even temporarily thwarted, must not be overlooked by one who craves understanding. It is characteristic of the American daily press and its correspondents that much emphasis is being laid on things quite obvious, and very little, if any, attention is paid to essentials just beneath the surface.

There, in the laboratory of Russian actual life, during the last half year, great changes have been taking place. Contrary to the forecasts of many a "friend of Russian democracy," however, the changes were confined to the economic system alone, leaving the political structure almost intact. The Kronstadt uprising in March, the Petrograd

conspiracy discovered in August, failed to shatter the hegemony of the working-class and the leadership of the Communist party. The famine gave opportunity for a display of those qualities of sagacity, quick decision, and exhausting work, characteristic of the better revolutionary elements, which enable their organization to cope with exasperating crises.

The population took the existence of the Communist government for granted. A policy of upsetting a well established national and local administration which has accumulated a stock of experience and knowledge, in favor of another government created on another basis of representation but without the apparatus of officialdom which has been so painfully constructed during these last four years, seems to appeal to the Russian masses very little, especially since there is no party or group in sight which might be preferred. The Constitutional Democrats have been utterly discredited and are a negligible quantity among the workmen and peasants, whatever their hold on the imagination of the intelligentzia and whatever their propaganda in Paris, Constantinople and Prague. The taint of connivance with foreign enemies in favor of intervention has removed this group from the Russian political map. The Socialists-Revolutionaries and the Mensheviki have practically pledged themselves to the Soviet system as a political foundation, and to an economic policy similar to that which is now in operation. Their accession to power might gratify their ambitions and pacify their supporters, but it would hardly mean a perceptible change in the conduct of the nation's business, aside, perhaps, from a still further slump in consequence of inexperience and clumsy dogmatic experimentation. The Russian masses seem to understand this situation quite clearly. The slogan of a constituent assembly may to an outsider have all the lure of judicial logic and all the thrill of a once-for-all manifested popular will; the Russian people, however, know that the convocation of an assembly at present will result in nothing but further disturbances, clashes, convulsions. The bent of the popular mind is plainly towards economic problems. Now that the war is over, that foreign intervention is less likely, that civil war has practically ceased, that the frontiers of the country are more or less secure, that the existence of the Soviet republic, de jure or de facto, is recognized by the other powers, it is considered imperative to begin the work of reconstruction.

The Communist government had enough flexibility and courage to relinquish many of its former principles and to face reality squarely. One fact was paramount: the possibilities of a social revolution in western Europe, which seemed so near immediately after the world war, had become remote. "The international situation presents now a certain equilibrium,"—said Lenin at the May conference of the Communist party. "It is a temporary equilibrium, to be sure, but an equilibrium it is." The federation of Soviet commonwealths east of the Rhine, the reinforcement of the Russian worker by German, Polish, Hungarian, Italian communist labor, the united front of industrial revolutionary forces against the "petty bourgeoisie" or against the farmer who clings to private property, the nationalization of all resources over immense stretches of the world—these elements of the communist "orientation" ever since 1917—had not materialized. Soviet Russia remained alone. Unable to be economically self-sufficient, it had to trade with the capitalist states on a commercial basis. Unable to force its own peasantry into communist agriculture by means of an alliance with the proletariat of Europe, it had to make concessions. Out of this new international situation sprang the recent economic policy of the Soviets.

At bottom it is an acknowledgement of the right of the peasant to the full fruit of his labor on the land that nominally belongs to the state. "Tax in kind," i. e. a definite percentage of the yearly produce instead of the former requisition by the state of all the surplus above a subsistence minimum, is what the peasant actually demanded in his innumerable clashes with the Soviet administration. The introduction of the tax was not so much a yielding to the demands of the village, as it was a means of inducing the peasant to increase his output, since the former policy offered little incentive to exertion and improvement. The net total of this year's tax was estimated at a little over one half of last year's surplus, and in time of good crops it may yield even more, making the difference slight, yet the change of policy is fundamental. The peasant becomes an owner of marketable goods. The state waives its monopoly of foodstuffs. It follows that monopoly of domestic trade must go. The peasant as seller of land products becomes a buyer of manufactured goods. Consequently, manufacturing must become free. The private employer is once more introduced. His business must not be tampered with by the state. Small buyers and small producers may form cooperative organizations to eliminate the middleman. Their property is to be intact. And since private work for private gain is again the practice, there is no reason for the state to feed the population except the employees of state industrial establishments and state institutions. Unlimited bank deposits, charges for communal public services, charges for rail and water transportation, taxation of private property and income, a new civil code, are only a logical sequence of the essential changes.

It is a marked retreat from the Soviet practice of the first three years of the revolution, and it would have seemed incredible to one who followed the trend of Communist policies toward the end of 1920. It was dictated in the first place, however, by the necessity of peace between village and town, and even more by the necessity of unloosing private initiative and stimulating production. What remains in the hands of the state are the mines, the transportation facilities, the largest and best equipped industrial establishments and foreign trade. Concessions to foreign capital may transfer part of the mining and manufacturing business to private management under state control. The very state owned factories are to be operated on a business basis. Money once more becomes the general medium of exchange, and plans are abroad to put the state financial system on a more solid basis.

Much speculation was wasted on the fate of communism in Russia. Former enthusiasts of the revolution were piqued by the new measures. Nervousness was exhibited even by a writer of Mr. Brailsford's caliber. "Is that what the glorious revolution has come to?" was the usual refrain. It must be noted that no such discouragement is visible in the ranks of the Russian workers. The May conference of the Communist party unanimously approved of the new policy. The welfare of the country, the appeasement of the villagers, the increase of the volume of commodities, the establishment of normal intercourse with the outer world, mean to the Russian rulers infinitely more than the most elaborate dogma or the most cherished ideal. "Let us be more modest in defining our aims," Lenin

writes. "Let us make large concessions, since they are not dangerous for the proletariat which is in the position of a dominant class. Let us rapidly collect the tax in kind, let us lease the enterprises which we can spare, let us not refuse concessions to foreign capitalists. A bloc of the proletarian state with state capitalism is required against the petty bourgeoisie. This alliance must be realized with deliberation and caution." The revolutionary leaders of Russia seem to maintain that the revolution has not pledged itself to any unalterable set of principles, that it owes account to nobody and that the *name* matters little to the new order. What is most precious to them from the standpoint of common weal is the dictatorship of the proletariat which has remained unshaken through all the vicissitudes of the recent adaptations.

The shocking economic denudation of the country makes these adaptations a trying thing. There is a vicious circle. Lack of fuel makes the production of iron impossible; lack of iron hinders the repair of railways; bad railways impede the transport of fuel and food; lack of food undermines all constructive work. With infinite effort the circle is being broken. No reliable figures are available as yet. Numerous reports, however, produce the picture of new stirrings in the economic field. The small independent artisan is beginning to supply the local market with the most elementary necessities. The peasant is glad to be once more the sole master of his produce, and he exchanges it readily for manufactured articles. Consumers' and producers' cooperative organizations have sprung up in great numbers and carry on a large volume of business. Those organizations enjoy the particular encouragement of the state. Nationalized factories and plants are being leased to cooperatives and private entrepreneurs. At the same time, the state owned plants are also shaking off their indolence, having been put on a new business basis, freed from the plague of red tape, and allowed to provide themselves in the open market with the necessary materials and fuel.

All of this really looks pitifully small in comparison with the magnitude of the country. Yet work is being resumed. Simultaneously, imports infuse, drop after drop, new blood into the economic arteries. The volume of foreign trade has grown rapidly since the beginning of this year. Rails, locomotives, agricultural implements, chemicals, foodstuffs are coming in. What seems most amazing is the fact that Russia also exports quantities of hemp, flax, hides, wool, tobacco and alcohol, all of which she needs sorely. A great nation with an industrious population and unlimited resources has been reduced to hideous poverty, yet faith has not died, courage has not vanished, and though multitudes of people labor in harrowing pain and with infinite patience over tasks which would be child's play under more favorable conditions, the striving towards a better life has never ceased.

The famine has put new obstructions in the way of regeneration, yet it has not stopped the process. In a measure, it has stimulated activities and forced the nation to heroic deeds which must elicit admiration. The panic of the first weeks soon gave place to organized aid. Thousands of communists, "responsible workers," were thrown on the famine front. Thousands of others were sent out into the rural districts of the provinces which enjoyed a normal or nearly normal crop,—to collect the "tax in kind." All the resources of the nation, meagre as they may be, were mobilized to combat the disaster. In a few more weeks the unorganized flight of the famine-threatened population was checked. A well regulated removal of children and of industrial labor from the famine stricken area was begun. Homes for children and work for adults were being provided outside of the hunger provinces, though, naturally, neither could be adequate. The main attention was concentrated on the timely collection of the grain tax and its transportation to the famine districts so that the peasants might be provided with seed. Early in September the Russian authorities could state with satisfaction that they had distributed in the famine area 180,000 tons of seed grain, a result nearly approaching the task they had set for themselves. At the same time, private aid from Russian workmen, Red army soldiers, labor unions, peasant organizations, town communities, cooperatives and cultural workers, generously offered in spite of poverty and semi-starvation, gave the famine sufferers both physical relief and the reassuring consciousness of not being left to their fate. The famine was met with the same spirit of generosity and self-sacrifice as would be shown in a just defensive war where the existence of the nation was at stake.

The hunger has not been defeated as yet. Terrible misery is ahead. Yet the Russians have the consolation of knowing that they have done their utmost, and that foreign aid, whatever its extent, is insignificant compared with the work performed by their people. The approaching winter, foreboding as it may be, finds a nation more united than ever, more willing to do creative work, though more impoverished and with less vitality even than in the worst stages of the war. Russia will vanquish the famine as it has vanquished foreign invasion and enemies within, but at what cost!

It is exasperating to think of the enormous quantities of materials and implements, rotting in the warehouses of America due to "business depression," which, offered on a long term credit, could set Russia on her feet and make her once more a great factor in world economy. The world needs the Russian market. Russia needs the now idle supplies of the world. Yet there is unemployment here and starvation there, and no steps are being taken to set the world's economic machinery moving.

MOISSAYE J. OLGIN.

Thunder Storm

O for all soundless Time's
Deep spells to lock it!
O for a little chime's
Clear bells to mock it!

O for a calm, to smooth
Your senses by it!
O for a balm, to soothe
Your breast to quiet!

O for the power to call
Your peace, and breathe it!
O for an hour to fall
Asleep, beneath it!

O for your hand, to hush
Loud caves of thunder!
O for the burning bush,
And graves thereunder!

ELINOR WYLIE.