

**HOW SOVIET ELECTIONS ARE HELD IN RUSSIA**

Prof. F. W. J. Bray, in Dearbon Independent.

Prof. Bray, who has just returned to England via Canada with a British regiment, was lately house master of the Alexander Lyceum in Petrograd, and has lived thirty-five years in Russia; for two years recently within the lines of the Bolshevik army.

The army against which Admiral Kolchak's adherents are fighting and which Americans know under the name of Bolsheviks, is officially termed "The Workmen's and Peasants' Army of the Federated Soviet Republic."

This is the army that has swept across European Russia, killing "Oppressors of the People," punishing the "exploiters of the Working Classes," and doing other such things, all tending to "raise the conditions of the laboring man," to "secure a more equal distribution of wealth," to "trample out tyranny," to "give liberty to the oppressed," and to inaugurate a regime of "Liberty, Fraternity and Equality" throughout the world.

Such is the task the Bolsheviks set themselves in Petrograd in 1917. They are going on with it still.

Having lived for two years within the lines of the Bolshevik army, I have seen something of interest to that very considerable number of persons who have not lived under Soviet government. I have seen something of Bolshevik rule in Petrograd, in a big provincial city, but I have seen more of it in country villages and tiny hamlets.

The world is already beginning to hear of what happens to a city that comes under Soviet rule, but the world has very little chance of ever finding out what happens to villages and hamlets that come under Soviet rule, because hardly a soul in those places can read or write or has any notion

of an outside world, of a newspaper or magazine. Such places are generally beyond the pale of postal service. The people who live in them are almost as ignorant as cattle and possess little more ambition than cattle; yet they are for the most part a kindly, peaceful and lovable people and deserve to have their wrongs made known to all the world.

I was an eye-witness to the inauguration of Bolshevik rule in the village of Karagai.

This village is situated in the Okhansk county of the province of Perm and, like most North Russian villages, it consists of a few very wide streets, which are unpaved, never cleaned, frightfully muddy in wet weather and horribly dusty in dry weather. It is laid out in rectangular plots and each plot contains that called a homestead. The Russian term is *dvor*; which in English signifies yard. This yard is a quagmire of evil smelling filth except when winter frost congeals it into a solid block. Around the yard stand the log hut in which the peasant and his family live, the stable, cowshed, storehouse and other buildings that made up the homestead of the peasant or farmer as we should call him in English. The whole is surrounded by a stone log fence.

The village of Karagai contained a hundred and forty such homesteads besides several small shops or stores, a smithy, a carpenter's workshop, a church, a school and a little hospital that served a tract of country as big as an American county.

At one end of the village stood the *voloste* or *vestry* where the heads of families used to meet to discuss local affairs. This *voloste* was a log building like all the rest, but of much larger dimensions and divided into rooms. This building faced the village green or market square which was surrounded by plain-built booths, where, on market days, anyone who had anything to sell might conveniently exhibit his goods.

About the middle of June, 1918, a company of the "Workmen's and Peasants' Army of the Federated Soviet Republic" came to this village. The company was composed of Rus-

sians, Moldavians, Austrians and Chinamen. In its ranks were sailors and soldiers who, after endeavoring to fraternize with the Germans, had deserted the front and sought safety in flight; prisoners of war who did not wish to return to their native country; factory hands who had found looting more to their taste than working; and foreign adventurers who had joined this army in hopes of getting something for nothing.

Every man was armed with rifle, bayonet, revolver and bombs; some carried swords in addition and the company possessed a machine gun.

This motley, numbering about 150 to 200 men, streamed into the village in "requisition" country carts or mounted upon "requisition" peasants' horses, and at once billeted themselves upon the inhabitants. Each hut they entered they took complete possession of, informing the owner that they were now "masters" of the country and "owners" of all it contained; that they had abolished czarism with all its rapacious tyranny and had substituted for it the "government of the people." They then sent out into all the surrounding hamlets a notice (verbal, of course) commanding that all adult males attend a mass meeting at Karagai on the following day. They then ate and drank—especially the latter—most liberally at the expense of the villagers, and, having posted sentries, went to sleep.

Early the next morning they set up their machine gun on a bit of rising ground that dominated the village green and posted themselves around the green. In the middle of this square there stood a modest little monument built of brick and iron commemorating the liberation of the serfs by Alexander II. This they demolished.

As soon as the men of the village and surrounding hamlets had assembled to the number of fourteen or fifteen hundred, the meeting was opened. The three commissars who acted as leaders of this company of the "Workmen's and Peasants' Army of the Federated Soviet Republic" made speeches. They were followed by others of the company. The speeches were all alike and consisted for the most part of such stock phrases as I have quoted above. The phrases came in different order, or one was emphasized more than another—that was all. If any one of the peasants attempted to speak he was promptly cautioned to hold his tongue, to listen and to learn.

As soon as these speeches were ended voting was ordered. Every free citizen of the Federated Soviet Republic was to vote for or against Bolshevik rule. He was to record his vote whether he wished to or not. A line of these soldiers of the W. and P. Army of the R. S. Rep. was formed across the village green. The peasants, addressed as *tavarishi* (chums, mates) were told that to go to this side of the line was to vote for Soviet rule while to go to that side of the line was to vote against it.

Two peasants at once moved to that side of the line, loudly declaring they would not vote for those who denied them the right of expressing their opinions.

A hail was called. These two men were promptly arrested as enemies of the people and without any form of trial were there and then shot. Their still expanding bodies were tumbled into a hastily dug hole and covered with earth. Then voting was resumed with the result that the whole male population of the district recorded a unanimous vote for the Bolsheviks, as was some time later made known in the Bolshevik newspapers both in the capital city of the province and in Petrograd.

**"MY SWEETIE"**

To be at the Opera House Next Monday.

What is without the shade of a doubt one of the most important of the season's bookings, is that of Max Bloom in the best of the new musical revues, "My Sweetie," which comes to the Opera House on Monday, Feb. 16, under the direction of Boyle Woolfolk and with the inimitable Max Bloom in the principal comedy role. This sumptuous offering was built to measure for the irrepressible Max by John P. Mulgrew, with tunes by Felix G. Rice, and its success testifies to the fact that they did a good job. Max isn't the whole show by any manner of means, for he is surrounded by a cast, including Alice Sher, Maud Rouch, Harry Kessler, Gladys Cardwell, Jollis Jenkins, T. T. Patton, Dixie Dare, Lew Swan and others, and a "Sweetie" chorus of twenty.

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