

AN EXPERT'S OPINION OF RUSSIA OF THE PRESENT

*Visiting Russian Professor Grants Interesting
Interview to Alumnus*

PROFESSOR PITIRIME SOROKIN, formerly of the sociology department of the University of Petrograd, who delivered a series of lectures in Ann Arbor last week, comes to us with the finest of all Russian recommendations; he was three times imprisoned under the Czarist regime, was once condemned to death, and was finally banished by the Communist government because he was a sociological scientist and wrote a book entitled "Hunger as a Social Factor." These facts attract our attention; but it is held because he has written two fine volumes on sociology, a volume entitled "Crimes and Punishments," and has now ready for publication a book called "The Sociology of Revolution," as well as because he has been an editor, was a member of the first

Executive Committee of the All-Russian Soviet, is a fine speaker, and is not a Communist.

In his statements about present conditions in Russia, Dr. Sorokin, if he errs at all, errs on the side of conservatism; for his criticisms are based upon official statistics published by the Bolsheviks

themselves, as well as upon his personal experience, which has been wide and unforgettable. The following statements are taken from an interview with him, and from a lecture that he delivered:

Industrial workers in Russia have decreased to thirty-five per cent. of pre-revolutionary numbers. The average monthly wage has decreased from twenty-two gold rubles to about eleven gold rubles. Moreover, the purchasing power of the ruble has gone away down. It is not surprising, then, that industrial production has fallen to twenty per cent of what it was in 1913. In the matter of transportation facilities, the number of wagons in Russia has fallen from 476,000 to 176,000, the number of locomotives from 19,000 to 7,000; two-thirds of the railroad bridges have been de-

stroyed, and one-third of the stations are in ruins. The government has issued 176 quadrillions of paper rubles—finally it ceased because the stuff was too valuable as paper to be used as money. Now it is engaged in issuing money of another sort, which is already going down in value.



PROFESSOR PITIRIME SOROKIN
Noted Russian Who Holds Strong Views
on Situation

Decrease in Population

In connection with these conditions in industrial life, may be considered the fact that between 1914 and 1917 the population of Soviet Russia decreased by twenty-two million, of which number about fifteen million died from famine. This leads us to the peasantry, who comprise about 90 per cent. of the population. Land under cultivation steadily decreased from 1914 to 1922, and there has been little improvement since the latter year. The reason for this was that the government took all of the produce above a very meagre living for the peasant; therefore the peasant tended to raise only the amount he could keep. Peasants are three times as poor as they were in 1914. Confiscation of crops, first, and now taxes three or four times as high as those of the Czarist regime, rob them on the one hand, while on the other they must pay three or four times as much for the products of industry, for industry is nationalized and the government sets the prices. Under these circumstances is it any wonder that famine grows?

The Status of Education

What is the condition of Russia in regard to education? There are, says Professor Sorokin, one-third fewer schools than Russia had in 1897. Trained educators have been dismissed, banished, starved or executed; and in their places the Communists are putting so-called "red" professors who are turned out of a preparatory institution in six months. Liberty of thought, liberty of meeting, liberty of the press, do not exist. What scientific work goes on, must be done in spite of the government, except that some work is permitted in the natural sciences. Sociology, political economy and political science are under the ban. It is interesting in this connection to know that the works of Herbert Spencer, of Carlyle and of William James have

been suppressed. In fact, the Communists have suppressed the literature that they themselves produced in 1917. Two years later it did not jibe with their beliefs. Nevertheless, many valuable books now exist in manuscript, waiting for the end of the dark ages; and there is considerable activity in the field of literature, especially among Russian authors now living abroad.

The Brighter Side

Such is the dark side. What hope is there for Russia? Since 1922 there have been, says Professor Sorokin, some signs of coming improvement. One sign is the growth of a new bourgeoisie, which is getting control of industry in spite of the government, and bringing back the capitalistic system, and belief in private property. Life is stronger than government, and life is asserting itself. The existence of the present government depends partly upon the exhausted condition of the people, which is slowly giving way to betterment, and partly upon the fact that means of communication are still in the hands of the rulers. But the government is really undermined, and cannot last. Russia is actually anti-Communist. Communist enthusiasm is gone, and the party is split; one faction is already de-communized and moving towards capitalism, another demands return to military communism, another demands democratization and representative government, another is made up of Communists of pure Russian stock, who are disgruntled because only one Russian is among those in power, and finally there is the group of six who really rule. They make an oligarchy, an oligarchy busily engaged in trying to keep the reins no matter what form of government may come out of the present chaos.

Russia is about to enter a new period of transition, out of which will come some form of farmers' democracy. The

order will be individualistic, capatilistic, and yet balanced by the presence of co-operative organizations. Russia will be nationalistic, but not militaristic, not Chauvinistic. Whether there comes a republic or a monarchy, there will be a sort of United States of Russia, and the central government will interfere little with the states.

Treatment of Foreigners

Professor Sorokin is quite optimistic for the future of Russia. He bases his optimism upon her wealth of unexploited natural riches, upon her immense population, and upon the latent talent of that population. He believes that Russia, in due time, will take her place with the Anglo-Saxon peoples in an amicable world government.

Finally, a word about the treatment

accorded foreigners who visit Russia. They are carried about in cushioned ease by the Communist government, without their knowing it. They are put up in palatial government hotels. They make the acquaintancè of men employed by the government for the purpose of becoming acquainted with foreigners and of guiding them in the way that they should go. Some of these guides are members of the old aristocracy, who have chosen to be Communist guides rather than corpses. In short, the visitor is not allowed to see anything that he should not see; he rarely, in fact, gets outside of the two or three cities which exist at the expense of the rest of the land, and there are parts of these cities that he never sees. Naturally he comes away with the impression that the Communists would have him get.