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# “Russia is Free!”

by Morris Hillquit

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Interrupting its monotonous tale of men's mad inhumanities, the crushing tale of suffering, death and destruction, of bleeding countries and agonizing nations, the transatlantic cable suddenly flashes the joyous, electrifying message: “Russia is free!”

Russia is free. All the dark powers of tyranny and reaction, of persecution and oppression, un-



der whose baneful rule the Russian people have been suffering and succumbing for generations have been conquered and destroyed. The malevolent dynasty of the Romanovs, which for 400 years has fastened itself to the Rus-

sian body politic like a bloodthirsty vampire, has been definitely overthrown. The weak and cruel features of the Russian autocrat, which until now frowned down upon the people of Russia from the walls of the gorgeous imperial palaces and great public buildings have been replaced by the defiant and triumphant red flags of the revolution.

The millions of Jews, Poles, Finns, and other oppressed races within the domain of the great Russian empire are at last to be accorded human rights. The odious restrictions on free speech and

press are to be abolished. The government of the country is to be constituted by the free choice of the people. Russia, dark and dumb and joyless Russia, will henceforth be a free, democratic, and happy republic.

The 200 million Russian subjects, enslaved and oppressed and persecuted and tortured for ages, have risen in their might and broken their chains. They are free, and no occult power on earth can enslave them again.

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Russia is free! What an intoxicating sensation, what a world of joy is contained in that magic phrase for us who for years and years have been watching the trials and ordeals of the great country and the struggles and defeats of its unfortunate people with alternating hope and despair. What a pathetic flush of happiness it must bring to the veterans of the Russian revolution, Catherine Breshkovskaya, Peter Kropotkin, Herman Lopatin, Vera Figner, and their few surviving comrades who have grown old and feeble and broken in the jails of Russia, in the cold deserts of Siberia, or in exile for their work and struggles in behalf of Russian freedom. What a tragedy that the martyrs of the Russian revolution, the Shalyalovs and Perovskayas and the thousands of noble and heroic young men and women, the flower and pride of the Russian youth, who for their love of the people were killed by Russia's

crowned hangmen, cannot be with us to share in our rejoicing. Let us honor their memory in this hour of our triumph. Let us remember that, if the harvest of popular freedom in Russia is abundant and resplendent, it was their blood that made its soil fertile. And let us seek what consolation we can in the conviction that the names of the noble martyrs of Russia's revolution will be worshipped and revered in all times to come, while those of its bloody tyrants will be loathed and execrated.

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The Russian revolution is the first bright ray of light that has come to us from Europe since the dark days of August 1914. It means vastly more than a mere national upheaval. It is a revolution of all-European, nay, of worldwide significance. For more than a century Russia has been the hope and the prop of all European reaction. The fall of Russian absolutism is the doom of political oppression all over the world. The workers of Russia, with their primitive and direct instincts, have been the first to recover from the artificially stimulate, mad passions of war; the first to pause in the slaughter of their innocent fellow workers in other

countries and to turn against their true enemies, their oppressors at home and the instigators of all fratricidal wars. If all signs do not fail, their brothers in Germany will soon follow suit and dispose of their Hohenzollerns and their junkers as the Russian people have disposed of their Romanovs and the reactionary cliques surrounding them. And then the workers in the other warring countries may awaken.

The Russian revolution was not accomplished by the liberal middle classes in the Duma. It was born on the streets of Petrograd and forced by the workers in revolt against the war, its savagery, its sufferings, and its privation. The spontaneous and victorious revolution in Russia, coming at this time and in this manner, means the beginning of the end of this war, and the end of all wars.

This war, the most gruesome and insane of all wars in history, was caused by the autocratic and bureaucratic governments of Europe. It will be ended by the people. The rule of the privileged classes is bound to bring strife and war among nations. A genuine and worldwide democracy alone can and will preserve perpetual peace among nations.

*Edited by Tim Davenport.*

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