

# CURRENT TOPICS

IT seems to be generally agreed in the courts of the world that Russia is face to face with a revolution that is certain to bring about radical reforms in the Russian government if it does not indeed entirely destroy the present government. Father Gopin, who seems to have assumed the leadership of the people, sent a message to the Czar announcing that on Sunday, Jan. 22, the people would appear at the winter palace in order to inform the emperor as to their needs. Father Gopon told the Czar that his ministers had not given him the full truth and the Czar was urged to appear before the people and receive their address in a courageous spirit, Father Gopon promising that no harm would come to the emperor. At the appointed hour, Father Gopon marched at the head of the people bearing his crucifix aloft above a great roll containing the precious petition. Father Gopon and his followers refused to obey the order to stop and they were fired upon with a blank volley. Several hundred soldiers in response to an appeal from the people threw down their rifles and refused to fire, but the Cossacks charged upon the crowd and hundreds of men, women and children were killed.

IT is not known in this country exactly how many people were killed and wounded, for reports estimate the number all the way from 500 to 5,000. It is claimed that a strict censorship over news prevents the people of other countries from obtaining the exact truth. The strike which was the beginning of the revolution is spreading throughout the Russian empire. St. Petersburg is in a stage of siege. General Trepoff, whose administration of the office of chief of police of Moscow brought upon him sentence of death from the revolutionary party, has been made governor general of the city. He has been vested with arbitrary power.

NUMEROUS circulars are being issued in the name of the people. One proclamation edited Jan. 22, and signed by "The Russian Social Democratic Labor Party" is as follows: "Comrades: So long as autocracy exists no improvement in our condition is possible. Therefore we continue to inscribe on our banners the following demands:

"The immediate cessation of the war.

"The summoning of a constitutional assembly of representatives of the people elected by universal and equal suffrage and direct, secret ballot.

"The removal of class and race privileges and restrictions.

"The inviolability of person and domicile.

"Freedom of conscience, speech, the press, meetings, strikes and political associations."

A second proclamation, dated January 23, says:

"The proletariat of all countries are united. Citizens, you yesterday witnessed the bestial cruelty of the autocratic government. You saw blood flowing in the streets. You saw hundreds slaughtered, defenders of the cause of labor. You saw death and heard the groans of the wounded women and defenseless children. The blood and brains of workingmen were spattered around where their heads had been laid.

"Who directed the soldiers to aim their rifles and fire bullets at the breasts of the laborers? It was the emperor, the grand dukes, the ministers, the generals, the nobles of the court. They are the murderers. Slay them.

"To arms, comrades. Seize the arsenals and the arms at the depots and at the gunsmiths. Lay low the prison walls. Liberate the defenders of freedom. Demolish the police and gendarmerie stations and all the government and state buildings.

"We must throw down the emperor and the government and must have our own government.

"Long live the revolution.

"Long live the constitutional assembly of the representatives of the people."

A third proclamation appeals to the people not to attempt to injure private property.

IT is recalled that Count Leo Tolstoy predicted this state of affairs three years ago. At that time, when Tolstoy believed he was dying, he wrote to the Czar and as we are reminded by a

writer in the New York World, told the emperor that the government's policy in suppressing the spiritual and material liberties of the people would have dire results. In that letter, Tolstoy said: "Everywhere, both in the towns and industrial centers, troops are concentrated and sent out with loaded cartridges against the people. In many places fratricidal conflicts have already taken place, and everywhere such are being prepared, and new and yet more cruel struggles will inevitably occur."

Count Tolstoy has decried all wars, declaring that there never was a good one. He is equally emphatic against revolutions, and his tone in addressing his "Dear Brother," the emperor, is all in sorrow, not in anger; a warning, not a threat. If the recent memorial of the people to the Czar is studied in comparison with Tolstoy's letter, it will be seen that the present uprising grows out of a denial of the very requests that Tolstoy made for the masses. Epitomized, those of Tolstoy were:

"First—The working people desire to be delivered from special laws that place them in the position of a pariah, deprived of all the rights of other citizens.

"Second—They desire freedom of removal from place to place, freedom of education, freedom of conscience, and, above all, freedom in the use of the land, the abolition of the right of landed property."

Concerning the latter reform, Tolstoy wrote:

"I also think that this measure would undoubtedly destroy all that socialistic and revolutionary irritation which is now spreading among the workers and is likely to be of the greatest danger to both the government and the people."

Blaming the Emperor's advisors for their "strenuous and cruel activity in seeking to arrest the eternal progress of mankind," Tolstoy wrote:

"But one can sooner arrest the flow of a river than that incessant progressive movement of mankind which is established by God. By measures of coercion one can oppress a people, but not rule them. The only means in our time to rule the people, indeed, is placing one's self at the head of the movement of the people from evil to good, from darkness to light; to lead them to the attainment of the objects nearest to this end."

A RUSSIAN who holds a high official post at Washington, speaking to Walter Wellman, correspondent for the Chicago Record Herald, said: "It is revolution, or the beginning of revolution in my country. My government will be overthrown and the grand dukes and the men responsible for this awful, this fearful blunder, should be taken out and hanged at once." Referring to this interview, Mr. Wellman says: "The Russian with whom I talked held the view that his nation was irretrievably ruined. He said if revolution did not come at once, it would come soon. This was the beginning of the end. He blamed the grand dukes and others in authority about the palace. They had kept the czar in ignorance of what was going on. They had made the czar believe his life was in danger and had spirited him away and placed him in hiding. They had given orders to the troops to fire upon the men, women and children, innocent people who were doing no wrong, who were meditating no crime or destruction, and they had thereby sealed the fate of the empire."

THE origin of the present difficulties in Russia was described in an interesting way by the Russian official to whom Mr. Wellman referred. Upon this authority Mr. Wellman gives the following explanation of the situation. "The killing of unarmed men, women and children on Sunday last was the culmination of labor agitation on a large scale. The work people of St. Petersburg and other large cities asked for an increase of wages, a decrease of hours of toil and other concessions to ameliorate their condition, which is admitted by unprejudiced observers to be most deplorable. The concessions which they demanded were refused them and they went on strike. Ostensibly they were on strike in the same way that American workingmen have so often struck, but deeper down they had far more serious grievances to avenge. They wanted freedom; they

wanted to be permitted to think as they pleased; they wanted free speech and, above all, they wanted the war in the east brought to an end. The war is extremely unpopular. The masses of the people cannot see that they gain anything by the war. They are weary of having their husbands, sons and brothers sent away to Manchuria to suffer and to be shot, for what they do not know. Worse still, the disasters Russia has suffered on land and sea have convinced the people the government is not only inefficient, but that it is corrupt. Gradually the labor strike has been turned into a political movement. It began with a demand for higher wages. It is culminating in a demand for overthrow of the autocratic government and the substituting therefor of a representative government."

FATHER GOPON, the leader of the revolutionists is of course attracting wide attention. On the day preceding his visit to the winter palace Father Gopon was excommunicated by the church authorities. Nevertheless, on the following day, arrayed in full vestments, carrying the crucifix, he marched at the head of the people whose cause he has espoused. A writer in the Des Moines, Iowa, Register and Leader says: "Gopon is a young man and a priest of the Russian church. He has always been an interesting personality, from the very days of his youth, when he showed unusual capacity for learning and grasping the problems of the people, even though he was but a peasant swineherd. His ability won for him early release from mere menial labor and he was given an opportunity and sent to a famous Russian school as a monk. But his leaning toward politics led to his exclusion from the seminary, and this exclusion stirred in him a great desire to get close to the people, to share their lot, and to help them in their almost hopeless struggle for the freedom that all men are entitled to. He determined that he could best serve his people as a priest, and he overcame the many obstacles in his way and finally graduated from the St. Petersburg Ecclesiastical academy. Immediately, Father Gopon took up his work among the laboring classes, whose leader he speedily became. He studied their condition, he was wonderfully impressed by their wrongs and sufferings, he felt the utter hopelessness of relief for them under existing conditions, and then set about to aid them in an appeal and demand for the establishment of their right in life, liberty and true pursuit of happiness. He proved himself a wonderful organizer. He gained such a hold upon the working masses that they virtually idolize him and follow him blindly. He is the heart and soul of the present movement, which is not merely a strike, but a demand for the fundamental rights of men."

FATHER GOPON, according to a Boston correspondent for the Chicago Record Herald, visited Boston in 1901 as a delegate to the 50th anniversary celebration of the Young Men's Christian Association. This correspondent says: "Father Gopon was present at a reception given the delegates by Governor Crane and those who met the priest say that he was greatly impressed by the proceedings, especially the governor's action in shaking hands with those present. He is described as a very energetic person, less than 30 years of age, and thoroughly aroused over the condition of the common people in his country. His name is said to be Agathon, the designation Gopon being assumed for political reasons. The priest displayed much interest in the affairs of this country, especially the police system and the popular freedom enjoyed in America."

ANDREW D. WHITE, former Ambassador to Russia, in a newspaper interview, said: "The czar is a weak man and can do very little. A weak man cannot know anything about the empire to speak of, because he is surrounded by grand dukes, women, etc., who tell him what they want him to believe and keep all the truth away from him which they do not want him to hear. The main difficulty in the whole case is that the emperor is supposed to do all the thinking for 140,000,000 people scattered over the largest territory possessed by any government in the world, with all