

# **Soviet Russia**

*Some Random Sketches  
and Impressions*

*By*

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**“Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,  
But to be young was very heaven.”**



Lenin

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## FOREWORD

These articles were contributed to various newspapers in India. Most of them appeared in the "Hindu" of Madras, the one on "Education" appeared in "Young India" and some have appeared in other papers. I am having them issued in book form with considerable hesitation. I realise, more perhaps than the average reader, their deficiencies and how disjointed and sketchy they are. Some of them, may I confess it, were written in railway trains, and all have been sandwiched into the intervals between other activities which absorbed most of my time. I am also fully aware that it requires a person of considerable knowledge and some courage to write about the complex and ever changing conditions of Soviet Russia. I claim no such knowledge and though I may possess the habit of rushing in where wiser people fear to tread, I do not claim to lay down the law about Russia or to dogmatise about anything that has happened there. I have found the study of Soviet conditions an absorb-

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ing one, and from the numerous enquiries that I have received, it is clear that many others hunger for information about them. This patchwork series of articles, with many omissions and repetitions, based on a little personal knowledge and more on the reading of books, will hardly satisfy that hunger. But perhaps it may answer a few questions and point, to those who wish to pursue the subject further, the path of fuller knowledge. Hence my temerity in offering this little book to the public.

Woodrow Wilson in his address to the Congress on December 17th, 1917, said: "You catch with me the voices of humanity that are in the air. They grow daily more audible, more articulate, more comprehensive, and they come from the hearts of men everywhere." To the student of modern Russia it is these voices of humanity that come, the cry of the undistinguished masses, ever louder and more insistent, and it seems to him that echoes answer from every country. A war weary world heard these voices in 1917. President Wilson heard them. Outlining his famous Fourteen Points—alas, where are they now?—he referred to the peace parleys between Soviet

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Russia and Germany and said: "The Russian representatives have insisted, very justly, very wisely and in the true spirit of modern democracy that the conferences they have been holding with the Teutonic and Turkish statesmen, should be held with open not closed doors. And all the world has been audience, as they desired. . . . . There is, moreover, a voice calling for the definitions of principle and of purpose, which is, it seems to me more thrilling and more compelling than any of the more moving voices with which the troubled air of the world is filled. It is the voice of the Russian people. . . . . They call to us to say what it is we desire, in what if in anything our purpose and spirit differed from theirs; and I believe that the people of the United States would wish me to respond with utter sincerity and frankness. Whether their present leaders believe it or not it is our heartfelt desire and hope that some way may be opened whereby we may be privileged to assist the people of Russia to attain their utmost hope of liberty and ordered peace." And the sixth of the Fourteen Points was to be the acid test for the powers:



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“The evacuation of all Russian territory and such a settlement of all questions affecting Russia as will secure the best and freest co-operation of the other nations of the world in obtaining for her an unembarrassed and unhampered opportunity for the independent determination of her own political and national policy, and assure her of a sincere welcome into the society of free nations under institutions of her own choosing, and, more than a welcome, assistance of every kind that she may need and may herself desire. The treatment accorded Russia by her sister nations in the months to come will be the acid test of their good will, of their appreciation of her needs as distinguished from their own interests, and of their intelligent and unselfish sympathy.”

These were generous words. But even the author and his own country failed to live up to them. And history shows us the result of this acid test and how the “sister nations” have, instead of giving sympathy and good will, ceaselessly sought to hamper and destroy the new Russia. Today, ten years after the war, how far we are from an open diplomacy can be seen from the recent

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secret Anglo-French Naval Pact. But Russia has survived because she had the "voices of humanity" with her.

I am grateful to the editors of the various periodicals in which these articles have appeared for their courteous permission to reprint them. I am specially grateful to the editors of the "Hindu" and "Young India." At the insistence of my friend the publisher some illustrations of his choosing have been included. They bear little relation to the text, but they may perhaps be appreciated by some of those who are venturesome enough to possess themselves of a copy of this book.

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

ALLAHABAD

*October 10th, 1928*