

R U S S I A

Then and Now

RUSSIA, THEN AND NOW

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

SECRET AND CONFIDENTIAL

The Experiences of a Military Attaché.

PRIVATE AND PERSONAL.

Further Experiences of a Military Attaché.

Translator of The German Official Account
of the War in South Africa.

RUSSIA THEN AND NOW

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PREFACE

“**YOU** ALONE CAN POINT TO” the contrast between the old Russia and the new. This remarkably flattering remark was written to me by the B.B.C. after my return from Russia in the year 1934. Readers will decide whether I live up to it! So far as was known nobody, acquainted with the Russian language, had visited the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.), who had had my advantages of having known imperial Russia intimately from the Court to the hovel, and who had travelled all over the empire in pre-war days.

When I took leave of the unfortunate Emperor Nicholas II and the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna in 1916, at his General Headquarters, for, as we believed, a few weeks, it could not be foreseen that my next visit to Russia would be delayed for eighteen years and take place in such utterly different circumstances. When I met Marie Rasputin (I forget her married name), the daughter of the

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starets, later and said something about Russia, she replied at once :

“ Ah, what used to be Russia.”

That great country has always attracted me strongly ever since my first visit in 1888 to learn the language, which earned for me the Civil Service Commission's certificate as a first-class interpreter. Afterwards, official and private sojourns in Russia, together with reading, and listening occasionally to broadcasts from Moscow, kept up my knowledge of the language. Circumstances had prevented me from going earlier to the U.S.S.R. after 1916 ; but I had always hoped, in a more or less vague way, to see the people again.

When, in the early summer of 1934, I asked about a visa to enable me to enter the country, I stipulated that I should be allowed to select my routes at random after arriving in Lenin-grad. If I had not been permitted to do this I would, of course, say so in this volume.

My impressions are recorded in it, and I have endeavoured to contrast the new with the old Russia, necessarily briefly and without wearying the reader with statistics. It will be seen that any comparison between the conditions in our own country and those obtaining in the U.S.S.R. is impossible, because there is no common denominator. In spite of

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some social evils England is, in my opinion, the most advanced nation in the world, whereas the Russian people are, on the whole, still very backward.

As the system is the same everywhere, with here and there slight modifications due to local causes, it was wiser, in my view, to concentrate on a few places instead of rushing about a country which covers one-sixth of the earth's surface in a ring fence.

The U.S.S.R. presents an extraordinary paradox. Lenin realized, before it was too late, that human nature is a factor which even he could not with impunity ignore. To-day, of course, the younger generation has never known different conditions or standards of living. Nevertheless, human nature shows itself in, for example, the lazy temperament of the average Russian. He will usually take as many holidays as he can get, whereas the Communist generally spends his leisure in some kind of social work. A high standard of duty is expected from him, and failure to attain it may cause him to be expelled from the Communist Party. The paradox is that the Russian also is a social and co-operative being, while at the same time he has his own individuality. In other words, he cannot escape competition. To put it briefly the U.S.S.R. is nominally

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Communist while strongly encouraging competition by the system of piece-work.

I went to Soviet Russia with a perfectly open mind. But I would indeed be a striking example of the basest ingratitude if my heart had not been with the Society of imperial Russia, which had for years lavished such boundless hospitality on me, while I have been almost powerless to aid its members in their misery and destitution.

Nevertheless, in common with some American capitalists of Russian extraction, there are, some of us think, certain aspects of the Soviet system which could advantageously be adopted in countries more advanced than Russia. Indeed, on January 26, 1935, Mr. Hore Belisha, the Minister of Transport, announced a *Five Years' Plan* for his Department! His bitterest enemy would not term him a Bolshevik.

This volume is about the Russia of to-day. Undoubtedly horrible things happened there during the last few years. The most ardent Communist would not wish to condone them, and I am not a Communist. An impartial traveller might spend years in the U.S.S.R. and he would still find something new in that land of surprises. I have written only of that which is actually in existence in the hope that these pages may help to give some idea of a great

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nation which is bound to exercise increasingly immense influence on the world.

The ample stocks of grain enabled bread cards to be abolished as from January 1 last. This is striking evidence of material progress. In new dwellings the ground floor is to be reserved for shops.

Excluding peasantry there were in 1928 11,000,000 employees and workers as against some 23,000,000 to-day.

Three-quarters of the population are 33 years old or younger ; most Russians, therefore, did not know the imperial system.

Recent concessions to the peasantry support my statements on pages 30, 185 and 280, that the Soviet system is capitalist in a sense. *But communal (State) ownership of the means of production stands on an apparently impregnable base as opposed to private ownership.

W. H.-H. WATERS.

OTTERY ST. MARY.

March, 1935.

CHAPTER I

FIRST VISIT TO RUSSIA

Why I Went to Russia—Qualified as Interpreter—Emperor Alexander III and his Consort—Lord Hutchinson of Alexandria—Appointed Military Attaché—Travels in Russia—Russo-Japanese War—Russian Commanders in 1904—Forecast of 1914—Permanence of Soviet Régime—Gold Production—With Emperor Nicholas 1916

AFTER a most interesting visit to the Emperor William at Doorn in the summer of 1933 I was able in the following year to achieve my old longing to revisit the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, a land which I had known so intimately years before the outbreak of the World War. Holding the certificate of the Civil Service Commission as a First-class Interpreter in the Russian language my acquaintance with it had been kept up by fairly regular perusal of books and newspapers. In addition, the modern marvel, wireless, enabled me to listen at intervals to conversational matters broadcast from Moscow.

My first visit to Russia took place as far back as the year 1888. In spite of numerous

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neglected opportunities during my life, that invisible ruler, whom we call Chance, often decided, unknown to me at the time, that some exceptional opportunities should not be disregarded. Until the year 1887 the idea of learning Russian had never occurred to me. Certainly I never dreamt that I would have relations one day with two Emperors, autocrats, of the vast empire, comprising about one-sixth of the earth's surface and extending in a ring fence for thousands of miles from the Gulf of Finland to the Pacific.

The truth is that in 1887 the impossibility of hunting three or four days weekly during the coming season became apparent. The money would not be available. Chance, therefore, decided that I should go to Russia to study the language and earn not only the coveted certificate, but a money reward of £200 as well, a highly profitable transaction, for my father most generously paid my expenses when living with a Russian family in St. Petersburg. It was during that first visit that I had the good fortune to be received by Alexander III and his charming Consort, sister of Queen Alexandra. His Majesty, with true Russian courtesy and hospitality, took notice of myself, a stray visitor, as if I had been a person of importance instead of merely a captain of artillery. He was aware

A VERY GREAT MAN

of the special mission with which my great-uncle, Lord Hutchinson of Alexandria, to whom the French had surrendered in Egypt in 1801, had been charged during the Napoleonic wars. A brother of his, Christopher, was so devoted to him that he followed him during his campaigns, and was dangerously wounded at the Battle of Eylau in the year 1807 while actually serving as a volunteer with the Russian army.

To cut a long story short, I was appointed, greatly to my surprise and gratification, Military Attaché to her Majesty's Embassy at St. Petersburg in April, 1893. In those days the post was one for a full colonel and as I was only a fairly junior major the Duke of Cambridge had already selected a senior officer. Lord Rosebery, the Foreign Secretary, however, supported the Ambassador's request for me. This was unknown to me at the time. The Duke was much upset, and eventually Lord Rosebery wrote to the Ambassador, the late Sir Robert Morier, that he had defeated the "whole British Army headed by the Duke of Cambridge!" Queen Victoria approved the nomination, and the Duke was always extremely nice to me afterwards. Sir Robert Morier was the greatest man in or out of the army under whom I ever served.

I took full advantage of my opportunities

FIRST VISIT TO RUSSIA

and travelled all over the empire, becoming acquainted with all sorts of people, some of them revolutionaries, their habits, customs, and mode of thought. I remained at my post for the full term of five years. This was unprecedented, for something had happened to each of my predecessors which caused their withdrawal from Russia. Six years after my return to England, to the War Office, I joined the Russian Army in Manchuria during the struggle with Japan.

It did not interest me to remain at General Headquarters to pick up accounts of occurrences at second-hand mingled with more or less fantastic gossip. I attached myself, therefore, to troops in the field. The result of my observations, which did not, of course, reflect in the very slightest degree on the splendid courage of the ill-fated Russian troops, may be summarized by referring to a statement in my Report on the Campaign. In it my conviction was expressed that the Russian generals as a body would not profit by the bitter lessons of experience. My opinion was evidently considered to be worthless. More than a year after Russia had made peace with Japan, as it was impossible for her to continue the struggle, and in spite of all that had happened to the autocracy, the late Lord Esher, who seems to

A MISTAKEN PROPHECY

have been a sort of governing director of the British Empire, wrote the following words to King Edward on January 21, 1907 :

A war with Russia on the North-West frontier (of India), being the gravest military operation which Your Majesty's Army could be called upon to undertake, covers by its magnitude all other conceivable operations. So that to be prepared for that eventuality is to be prepared for all others (*Journals and Letters*, Vol. II, p. 218).

The late Lord Sydenham was the only outstanding man of the time who was bold enough to differ. Lord Esher himself had previously accepted war with Germany as not far away, the real reason being, as he wrote, the progress which German trade was making overseas.¹ We must stop that sort of thing and take her trade for ourselves. A sad miscalculation.

On April 12, 1898, I wrote a letter foreshadowing what was certain to happen to the Russian aristocracy in the event of a revolution in their country. In 1904 a Russian small-holder, representative of his numerically huge class, asked me whether it was true that Japan was coming to the aid of his own country! But in 1914 Sazonov jammed Russian public opinion down our throats. There was no public opinion. Consequently, when the Revo-

¹ *Journals and Letters*, Vol. II, p. 186.

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lution actually broke out in March, 1917, I at once wrote my warning to the Foreign Office that "Russia is dead to the Allied cause." Allied plans should, I urged, be recast on this assumption. The Russians would make peace with Germany on the best obtainable terms, which were those of Brest-Litovsk. The British Government, quite naturally, thought that Sazonov knew his countrymen better than a foreigner.

These words have not been written with the object of endeavouring to show what a clever fellow I was, but as a suggestion that if, as events proved quickly, I was right about the future of Russia in the year 1917, it may be that I shall be justified in making some other forecasts. I have in fact given very substantial proof of my conviction since that year, namely, that the Revolution had come to stay in spite of the earlier Bolshevik administration. This was in some respects so fantastic that little knowledge of human nature was required to feel that drastic modifications must soon be made, as indeed was the case. Proof of my conviction is afforded by the fact that I invested money in Bolshevik securities at a time when they were issued to pay 10 per cent in sterling. To-day the rate has fallen to 7 per cent. My former holdings were bought from and sold

BRITISH ATTITUDE TOWARDS SOVIET

back to the Soviet Government at par, that is to say without any loss of capital value, in spite of the dynamiting of Arcos by that eager Puritan, Joynson-Hicks. At any rate I have the courage of my convictions, especially in these times of very low rates of interest in even not very stable states ! The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics has to-day an enormous asset. It is very nearly, if not yet quite the second largest gold-producer in the world.

When I presumed to warn the Foreign Office about Russia in March, 1917, I did not expect that attention would be paid to me. During the course of the World War the late Lord Stamfordham wrote to me, in a chatty letter, that the ways of our military authorities were curious because they had no work for me with the exception of one or two temporary odd jobs. No doubt I ought to have gone round cap in hand soliciting crumbs ; but that sort of thing is distasteful to me. Perhaps it was as well, for I am not, fortunately, soured and have seen so many careers of generals cut short as if electrocuted.

In 1916, however, the late Field-Marshal Sir William Robertson, for whom I had some years previously procured his first staff appointment in England—and after a sharp struggle was able to keep him in it—sent me to the

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Emperor Nicholas at his General Headquarters. I had known him very well before the World War. When I was there messages of very warm appreciation reached me occasionally. But stronger forces prevailed. Sir Edward Grey, who was anxious for me to stay in Russia, went out of office, and I retired permanently to my poultry yard and books. At the time, however, that I took, as the Emperor Nicholas and I believed, temporary leave of his Majesty in October, 1916, Chance had decided that eighteen years should elapse before Russia, under a new name, should welcome me again. When the War Office called for volunteers to help in extricating our forces from the Archangel region my application to go even as an orderly was quickly turned down. In 1934 a very different Russia greeted me.

CHAPTER II

BOLSHEVIKS TRIUMPH

Allies ignore Russia—Difficulties of Soviet Government—Allied Intervention—U.S.S.R. invited to join League of Nations—Soviet Press—Five Years' Plan—Orthodox Church—Population—Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin—The Bolsheviks Triumph—Mistakes of Communists—Mr. Bruce Lockhart's Vision—Government

A CLAUSE of Mr. Lloyd George's indictment of our military and naval strategy during the World War is contained in Volume III of his *War Memoirs*. It relates to Russia. She had been practically ignored by the Westerners, none of whom had ever met Alexyeev, the very able chief of the Emperor's General Staff. It was impossible for him to leave his country for conferences, and until the ill-fated mission of Lord Kitchener started for its doom no attempt had been made to get into direct touch with the Russians. Mr. Lloyd George, on becoming Prime Minister, at once realized—indeed, he had already done so—the threatening consequences of this attitude on the part of the Westerners and succeeded in calling a conference at Petrograd in February,

BOLSHEVIKS TRIUMPH

1917. Of course I was not a member of our mission, especially perhaps because the Emperor, and Gourko, who was temporarily acting for Alexyeev, had specially asked for me. It was, however, as events soon demonstrated, too late. Within a month the great Empire had crashed, entailing consequences to the world which the majority of people do not yet realize.

The bald truth is that the Soviet Government, in spite of Civil War, Allied intervention on a colossal scale with almost all the resources of the world behind it, scarcely any money, and no credit, is to-day in such an unassailable position that the Great Powers, which strained every nerve in the attempt to smash Bolshevism, unanimously invited the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to become a member of the League of Nations on terms of perfect equality! Allied statesmen left one vital factor out of their former calculations. They took no account of Russian psychology. But they were not to blame in this respect, because they had to rely on advisers, ignorant themselves of human nature.

After March, 1917, nothing seemed more improbable than my return to Russia. My antecedents, which would have been, of course, well known to the new rulers, and the numerous

SOVIET PRESS INFORMATIVE

counter-revolutionary efforts on the part of other Powers, might even now have been an insuperable obstacle. In fact, the idea of re-visiting the U.S.S.R. did not occur to me for several years after the conclusion of the World War. The vague desire to go back there often came into my mind. But I had other occupations, and the dream appeared to be quite unrealizable. I kept in touch, however, with what was going on, so far as this was possible. The Press in this and other countries was worthless. Nothing Bolshevik could be either good or honest.

The two principal official Soviet newspapers, the *Pravda* and *Izvestya*, however, afforded very valuable information on important subjects. Propaganda and exaggeration were, of course, to be expected. But then Russians have always been noted for their exuberance in writing and speaking. On the other hand, decrees and official criticisms published in those two newspapers showed—and show still—that there is no intention of concealing grave faults and shortcomings, even when official Communists are concerned. Faults and mistakes are ruthlessly exposed, instead of being, as in other countries, hushed up. The first Five Years' Plan undoubtedly set up a standard which was far too high, partly perhaps in order to instil

BOLSHEVIKS TRIUMPH

enthusiasm for an unattainable ideal, not a bad idea in itself. But I believe the principal reason why the standard was originally set too high was because of the ignorance of the teachers themselves.

These teachers, or at any rate these directors of teachers, were and are chiefly, but not invariably, Communists. It is, it seems to me, desirable to give some general information concerning the administration of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics before proceeding to relate what struck me there in the year 1934. It would otherwise be difficult, if not impossible, for anyone, who wishes to form his own judgment, but is unacquainted with the Russians, to arrive at a fair conclusion either for or against the present system.

With a mostly illiterate immense population and bred by the Orthodox Church to be almost fantastically superstitious, it was certain that autocracy could not possibly be gradually smoothed away and democratic methods instituted as in this country. For one thing the racial temperaments are so totally different. The change in Russia, when it should come, was bound to be catastrophic as regards vested interests. A vast population, comprising many white races, and now not far short of 170 millions, felt the urge for freedom from slaughter

LENIN, TROTSKY, STALIN

for objects of which they knew nothing and cared less. They also hoped in the future to have a standard of living which would be at least an improvement on that to which they had been accustomed.

The occasion found the men. Lenin was a cold fanatic, Trotsky a roving journalist whose innate military genius made the Red Army what it is to-day, namely, a wonderfully efficient instrument, quite different from the imperial army. Stalin, dictator in fact, is the son of a Caucasian workman. He had practically no education nor, of course, any knowledge of foreign countries. In this respect he resembled Lord Grey of Fallodon. But knowledge of other lands besides one's own is a handicap unless the possessor of it can apply what he knows, or thinks he knows. It comes to this that men—and women—of the potential ability and power of those remarkable Russians just mentioned can, without other equipment than their own personality, rise to the highest posts. Hitler, a foreigner, although a German, and a weekly wage-earner, is another outstanding instance.

The leading Bolsheviki, therefore, when in actual possession of power, obviously had it in them, as events have demonstrated, to emerge triumphantly from the ocean of difficulties in

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which they were at first submerged. But they also had obstacles in their path which revolutionary leaders in other countries had not to face, not to anything approaching the same extent at any rate. The revolutionary flood in Russia literally overwhelmed the educated classes to a degree unknown in former similar outbreaks. It does not matter as regards the actual results whether leaders like Lenin themselves wished this to happen, or whether the feeling among the liberated masses was too strong for them. Lenin was a cultured man. And yet he was so fanatical at first in pursuit of his ideal Communism that he may well have wished to make a clean sweep and put every anti-Bolshevik out of business in order to ensure the success of his plan.

In any event the result would have been the same. The teachers themselves, the Communists, had to learn the harsh lessons of Dame Experience, and the acquisition of this knowledge takes time. Moreover, it is not, I think, realized as yet, except by relatively few persons, what the stupendous obstacles were which lay in the paths of the new leaders. Besides the ignorance prevailing everywhere the Soviet Government had to contend with the Civil War and the mad but terribly harmful Allied

OPPORTUNITY SCOUTED

intervention simultaneously. It had scarcely any money and no credit at all behind it.

Besides the loss of great numbers of valuable British lives our expenditure on intervention must have exceeded 150 million pounds. It was, however, so cleverly camouflaged in Public Accounts that an exact total of the cost is impossible. And all the time events might have been shaped so differently and with such gratifying results to British trade and employment. If the British Government of the day had adopted the wise advice of that brilliant man, Mr. Bruce Lockhart, who knew his Russia before the outbreak of the World War as few foreigners knew it—he was intimately acquainted with all classes of the community instead of only with one or two—we would have supplied British officers to help to reorganize the Russian Army, and a Debt settlement would have been reached, by Lenin's desire, more satisfactory than was extracted from any of our western debtors. Instead, Lockhart had the very narrowest escape with his life after awaiting death for weeks in the Kremlin. But what could one expect from statesmen—if one likes to call them so—who were honestly convinced that Trotsky, of all Russians, was a German officer in disguise? When that conviction had to be cast aside, it was still maintained that

BOLSHEVIKS TRIUMPH

he was at least in German pay! Similarly, Sir Austen Chamberlain protested in the House of Commons that England's foreign policy was not going to be influenced by the views of manufacturers.

I do not know, but somehow think that I would have asked for permission to visit Soviet Russia several years before my first request—which was refused—was put forward in the early part of the year 1930, if I had thought that there was any likelihood of its being granted. But the events so summarily mentioned showed that it could not possibly have been entertained.

The Russian word *Soviet* means *Council*. As very few people in England can have any idea of the method by which the ruling body of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, namely, the Central Executive Committee, is formed, this should be outlined now. Stalin was secretary of that Committee, and is, of course, still its leading member.

A bunch of villages in the same region elects delegates. One delegate is allowed for every ten members of a Soviet. Everybody is a member of his or her Soviet. Then comes, higher up, the District Congress of Soviets, composed of delegates from the rural Soviets, one delegate being allowed for every thousand

ELECTIONS IN U.S.S.R.

inhabitants up to a maximum of 300 delegates. But Soviets of towns and factories send five times as many delegates, which gives them a great advantage. The new electoral laws are to effect a change. Then comes, higher up again, the Provincial Congress of Soviets. One delegate is selected for every 10,000 rural electors, while towns and factories are allowed five times as many, namely, one delegate for every 2,000 electors. Finally, at the top, is the Congress of Soviets of the Union Republics in which urban workers have one delegate for every 25,000 inhabitants, whereas the rural ones are again allowed only one delegate for every 125,000, or one-fifth.

This Union Congress elects the Central Executive Committee of the U.S.S.R., which is divided into two chambers, namely the Federal Council of some 400 members, and the Council of Nationalities, composed of five members for each republic, or autonomous region. This Committee selects the actual Executive of the great offices of State. Theoretically the Secretary of the Central Executive Committee resembles the Secretary of the Executive Committee of the English Labour Party. But in practice he is much more than this. An able resolute man like Stalin becomes really a dictator.

BOLSHEVIKS TRIUMPH

In circumstances such as those still existing in the U.S.S.R. it is obvious that the way is open to much manipulation in the elections, the same sort of thing that occurred in other respects under the secret police of imperial Russia. The present system of elections is, of course, a very indirect method of choosing representatives.

Astonishing as it may appear to those who do not believe in the stability of the Soviet régime, the Soviet Union Congress at Moscow is to be elected by secret ballot in future! If this ballot be properly conducted, the Russians will be free to select any form of government which appeals to the majority. Giving my own opinion for what it may be considered to be worth, it is that the Central Executive Committee would not, on February 1, 1935, have ordered the drafting of a law to this effect if it had not felt supremely confident of the stability of the Soviet régime. Moreover, elections are to be direct instead of indirect, and the unjust discrimination against peasant voters is to be abolished, probably because illiteracy is now almost extinct in the U.S.S.R.

CHAPTER III

PASSPORT VISA REFUSED

Time Schedule for Tourists—The Kutepov Kidnapping—Visa Refused—Foreign Plot—The Ukraine

TEN years after the Treaty of Versailles had been signed, the urge to visit the U.S.S.R. again asserted itself, and I asked the opinion of a fellow-countryman, a dauntless man, for his judgment. He had been a prisoner of the Reds during the Allied intervention, and he eventually escaped with his life because he had played his cards with such remarkable skill. He is much younger than myself, and strongly urged me not to make the attempt owing to the dirt and discomfort to be experienced at times if I should roam about at will. There would, of course, have been no object in my going if a beaten tourist track would have had to be followed. For one thing, tourists must be kept to a strict time-table on the American model, and travel, therefore, mostly by night trains. This would have caused me to miss much of what I specially wished to see and hear.

PASSPORT VISA REFUSED

I hesitated for some time. I wanted to go, but, as my wife said: "What's the good?" We happened to be staying with friends in London, in the early part of the year 1930, when there was a sudden and most violent outburst by the Press against the audacious methods of the Soviet Government. It was very artistically staged; but the laurels of the stunt had certainly to be awarded to the French newspapers, as was to be expected in the circumstances.

A Russian White General, Kutepov, was alleged to have been actually kidnapped by the Bolsheviks in broad daylight in Paris, gagged, whisked into a striking grey car—no doubt a very likely colour to have been chosen for the crime—and carted off to a Bolshevik vessel, which had been seen to be lying off a Channel port for some days. The inference was, of course, that the unfortunate soldier had been taken to Russia, tortured in order to extract his counter-revolutionary secrets, and then assassinated in circumstances of peculiar horror.

All this, with the various side-lights of clues, informers, and eye-witnesses, was NEWS for some time, when it was suddenly dropped like a hot coal without anything else new and startling to take its place for the moment. I had kept an open mind on the subject, for my only source of information was the Press here and in Paris,

A GENERAL KIDNAPPED

and in such cases it was unlikely to be impartial. I could not see what information of special value the poor General had to communicate that would not already be in the hands of the extremely efficient Soviet Secret Service. It would surely have been wiser to keep him under observation in order to discover his agents from Russia. Belgian babies' wrists, amputated by German bayonets, recurred to me. To digress for a moment, the inventors of that legend, or even one of them, should have cut off the wrists, and presumably the hands also, from a dead baby, not necessarily a Belgian one. That would indeed have been convincing evidence.

By a curious coincidence it came to my knowledge—not from a Russian source—that some funds, of which the General had been the treasurer, had been transferred from a Paris bank to one in Switzerland shortly before his disappearance. How the Bolsheviks had managed to effect this coup, if they had actually done so, I cannot explain. I made up my mind and, without saying a word to anybody, determined to ask for a visa.

The Soviet Embassy was then housed in 40 Grosvenor Square, a building which had been let to various tenants for years. Some great London hostesses had occupied it before the World War, and had entertained there royally

PASSPORT VISA REFUSED

in more senses than one. On sending in my card I was told that the Ambassador, M. Sokolnikov, was out; but after some delay I was shown into the room of M. Bogomolov, the Counsellor of Embassy. I had anticipated that my visit would last only for a few minutes, sufficient to explain the purpose of my call. I was mistaken.

M. Bogomolov promised to submit my request to Moscow. He was very pleasant and is now, I think, Minister at Peking. We talked about all sorts of things concerning pre-war as well as Soviet Russia. As the house must have a large basement and ample cellarage I remarked that he could easily quicklime my body and nobody would be any the wiser as nobody had known of my intention to visit the Embassy, and he could see for himself that no police agents were watching the building. When I eventually returned to my hostess's house and recounted my exploit at luncheon I was complimented on my physical courage!

About two months elapsed before an answer from Moscow reached me. It was vague in the characteristically Russian fashion; but its meaning was clear. Permission could not be granted at present. This was not really surprising. Some time previously, in the year 1928 in fact, the Soviet Government had dis-

PLOT AGAINST U. S. S. R.

covered a very real counter-revolutionary plot. The Polish Dictator, Pilsudsky, and the French General Lerond, an intimate of Marshal Foch's, had been conferring in Bucharest. The idea was to break up the Ukraine, give part to Poland, part to Rumania, and the core, if there should be any core left, was to become an independent State. The French Government would assist very materially indeed with arms and money, while, as regards the British Government, Sir Austen Chamberlain, who could not, if he wished, involve this country, would observe a benevolent neutrality, so it was reported.

The negotiations lasted for several weeks, but there was a snag. Rumania, in view of the antipathy displayed by her recently-acquired Hungarian subjects, wished first of all to make sure of Hungarian neutrality. As Hungary refused to commit herself, the plan fell to the ground. As far as I am aware, no English newspaper would publish anything on the subject.

The negotiations could not, of course, have been instituted in the first instance without the advice of and promises of support from sympathizers in the Ukraine, Russia's greatest wheat-growing region, with about 35 million inhabitants. If the scheme should have materialized, the body blow thus dealt to the Union of

PASSPORT VISA REFUSED

Soviet Socialist Republics would have been a fatal one, and Bolshevism would have been put out of business. Some of the counter-revolutionaries, of whom there must have been many, were sure to have been detected. This was the case, and some paid the penalty with their lives.

When my application for a visa was put forward, a little more than a year after the Bucharest negotiations, the Soviet authorities were scarcely likely to credit my assertion that my visit was intended to enable me to see only the social and economic systems for myself and compare them with the old régime impartially. They may have had legitimate doubts. I might have endeavoured to try to tie together some of the threads broken when plots had been discovered. I had to accept the situation and abandoned the idea of seeing Russia again. But Chance had decided otherwise unknown to me.

CHAPTER IV

CAPITALISM IN FACT

Second Request for Visa—English Slums—Bad Conditions in U.S.S.R.—My Plan—Police Surveillance—Communists few in Number—Communism merely a Name—Human Nature—Capitalism in Fact—Labour Shortage

MY wife died towards the end of the year 1932, my only child had been killed on the West Front in the Royal Flying Corps almost immediately after his arrival there in 1917, and I was very much alone in the world. In the spring of the year 1934 I resolved to make one more attempt to penetrate into the U.S.S.R. It was entirely successful. But before relating my travels one or two matters should be mentioned. Owing to various causes more than four years had elapsed since I had spent more than a dozen hours in London at one time. It was time to issue from my shell, and I had a very enjoyable visit of nearly a fortnight, meeting a number of interesting persons. There would be, I learned, no difficulty about a visa.

CAPITALISM IN FACT

It would be too much to say that, if I should have had to follow the tourists' beaten tracks, my journey would have been useless, for after all one has eyes while a word here and there is often productive of results. Tourists must, however, have their routes and time-tables already mapped out for them. There is so much to be seen, and the distances in Russia are so great, that the American system of utilizing almost every second of time is imperative in the ordinary course of things. In the first place nowhere are tourists taken to see slums. In the U.S.S.R. this would not often be possible, for suitable accommodation is available only in relatively few cities. Many critics forget, or do not know, that the Soviet Government has had only about fifteen years in which to begin to develop its grandiose plans. To-day in England in every town, large and small, numbers of highly respectable families are still compelled to live in wretched, and often horrible, unhygienic surroundings. We are rather inclined to criticize other countries for not practising what we preach. But then we often do the same thing, although we have the means of carrying out our precepts. So many Christians assert: "I will arise and go unto my Father," but it is really the last thing they intend to do. .

TRAVEL IN RUSSIA

The vast difficulties confronting the Soviet Government have already been outlined. They must be borne in mind if a fair and impartial judgment is to be given. In places off the beaten track the old conditions, under which Russians had to live in former days, must still persist on a large scale, for a good long time to come. This subject will, of course, be treated presently. Owing to the time factor for tourists, whether in parties or travelling independently, most of the journeys must be undertaken by night trains, so that as much daytime as possible can be allocated to sightseeing. My wish, on the other hand, was to travel largely by day, in order that I might see and converse with people at railway stations. The arrival of a train was and is to-day a great attraction for the local population in country districts. At any rate I knew beforehand what I wanted to do in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. This was to see the old as well as the new. Samples only, of course, considering the vastness of the country; but then the system is, with insignificant modifications, the same everywhere. I might decide to prolong unexpectedly my stay in one place and to shorten it in another. Freedom of choice was, therefore, essential for me.

The police systems on the continent are

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different to our own. The movements and actions of new arrivals are likely to be objects of surveillance abroad. This is not peculiar to the U.S.S.R. Many years ago my friend, the great traveller, General Grombchevsky, told me in a remote part of Central Asia: "Ten thousand pairs of eyes are following your every movement." I didn't object. I acquired most valuable information in a perfectly legitimate manner. The inquisitiveness of Russian authorities in those days was patent: I was once the guest of the Governor of Margelan. Within an hour after my arrival my baggage had been searched, but the contents had not been replaced in the order in which they had been left by me. While in the U.S.S.R. I purposely gave every facility for my papers to be examined. They had not and could not have been touched. Microphones underneath the bed would have been useless, for I received nobody there except a medical man.

It will be described in more detail later on, but to show that I had freedom of movement and observation it can be said that, towards the end of my travels, Soviet authorities, with whom I discussed certain matters, did not endeavour to minimize the fact that there is still in the U.S.S.R. a great deal of dreadful suffering.

ENTHUSIASTIC COMMUNISTS

Another point must be emphasized at the outset of my story if readers unacquainted with Russia are to understand the situation. The Communist Party, officially so styled, is in complete control of the country. Only about one and one-half per cent of the total population, however, are Communists. In other words there are perhaps nearly three million Communists out of a figure approaching 170 millions. Numbers of Russians are, however, qualified to join the Party ; but, as some of them told me, they do not desire to do so.

One important reason is that while Communists have certain privileges, or at any rate material advantages, they do work harder than the average Russian. Many, possibly most, Communists are enthusiasts ; there are, however, others, who relish their status, but, like some influential persons in all countries, are naturally lazy. Many, who could qualify for admission to the Party, but do not wish to work harder than is absolutely necessary, or whose domestic ties would hinder them from doing so, remain outside it. A severe three-years' probationary test is indispensable. Discipline is very strict, and some members, who have not maintained a sufficiently high standard of duty, are expelled every year. Communists, therefore, work harder than the average Russian

CAPITALISM IN FACT

either because they wish to do so, or for fear of expulsion from the Party. Their spare time, especially on the "Day Out," is frequently utilized in unpaid labour, perhaps outside their own particular line. The average Russian takes all the holidays he can get just like he used to do.

For those who know of Russia, and who would read this book, it would be trite to say that the administration of the U.S.S.R., although termed Communist, is not so in fact.¹ This fact would be admitted by them. Communists, however, would deny the statement, because they claim that the Russian system is only the first step towards Communism. My view is that of Lenin. He tried Communism and was soon forced to abandon it on account of the invincible opposition of the overwhelming mass of the population, namely, the peasantry. Stalin reintroduced it and soon had to give it up. Surely human nature will prevent a reversion to Communism? Communal ownership is another matter.

Communists may, and some do, urge that Lenin had to deal with a priest-ridden population which had been brought up poles apart from Communism, whereas the rising generation has never known any standard of living different to the present one. They go on to

¹ See Preface.

LENIN OVERLOOKED HUMAN NATURE

say that, as the present system is developed with, of course, greater material comfort for all, there must be such plenty for everybody that absolute Communism will come of itself. Frankly, I do not pretend to know. But, until incontrovertible evidence is produced on behalf of the Communist claim, I confess that my belief remains unshaken, namely, that human nature will beat Communism.

When Lenin became the absolute master of Russia, and began by introducing Communism pure and simple, impartial observers at once recognized that this was most unlikely to endure, for it omitted to take human nature into account. Wages in the towns had risen to fantastic heights, largely owing to the scarcity of foodstuffs as well as of other things. The peasantry was not likely, therefore, to continue to grow food for the towns in return for a practically valueless currency which could not procure for the peasants—that is to say, again, the overwhelming mass of the population—the articles of which they stood urgently in need.

Lenin, like all great men, faced the facts. He had tried force, but the military detachments were often massacred. He, therefore, introduced a new system whereby those who produce most should earn the highest rewards—piece-work, in fact. This system applies to-day both

CAPITALISM IN FACT

to industrial factories and to agricultural workers whether on State or Collective farms. It is Capitalism in fact, although not in name.¹ But the evils of Capitalism as we know it in western lands cannot arise in the U.S.S.R., because a series of Trusts, whose management ultimately merges in the State, controls all production and distribution, with a view to more or less equalizing these, with, of course, the exception of the relatively unimportant free agricultural markets.

The Soviet Government is, of course, a Dictatorship, just like other Governments, only more drastic. With such a backward people this is to be expected. Criticism of the system is forbidden. Russia, as we call that great country, is ruled autocratically by a small fraction. If the peasantry, which, as has been stated, forms the overwhelming mass of the population, should object strongly to the present system, it could undoubtedly put the Communists out of business. There is, it is true, a very large and, if one may judge from what I saw of it, a very efficient army, to which must be added, for political purposes, a huge police army. But these together can police the country in only very small detachments if there should be general unrest. A general peasant

¹ See Preface.

AN ASSURED LIVING FOR EVERYBODY
rising would massacre them. It may be urged that absence of communications between different regions would prevent this. But what happened in 1917? The huge Russian armies on a front many hundreds of miles in length felt an electric thrill run simultaneously through them.

Moreover, the Russians are very patient. By propaganda they are exhorted to work hard for better times for everybody, when every deserving person shall have at least a sufficiency of this world's goods and pleasures before anybody else has more than he needs. They know, for it is obvious to them, that there is no small but wealthy class living in luxury. There is room for everybody to earn an assured living, subject to exceptions to be mentioned later. The country is still greatly under-populated, but the number of inhabitants is rapidly increasing. Many changes will occur by the time that the territory is fully populated. What may happen when it is, as in England, considerably over-populated, is not worth considering. It will be a world quite unlike this one, probably. The modern village child here cannot realize what it was like when there were no pictures, radios, or buses.

CHAPTER V

SYSTEM OF TRUSTS

Travel in Russia—Archbishop and the Vicar—Voyage to Leningrad—A Magnate's Household—King Edward on Tipping—Foreign Office Anxious—System of Trusts

BEFORE arranging for booking my passage to Leningrad by sea in June, 1934, I was suddenly assailed by a doubt. I remembered the discomforts of travel in Russia in old days, except, of course, in international *trains de luxe*, and according to reports in the English Press the ordinary traveller was likely to find matters still worse under the Soviet régime. It was not the prospect of the long distances which repelled me. In former days in many parts of the world I was accustomed to them. My winter drive across Siberia in an open sleigh, when the thermometer fell to fifty-eight degrees below zero, Fahrenheit, transcended anything to be encountered during the summer of 1934. What did, however, make me uneasy was the appalling state of the sanitary accommodation. So many years had elapsed since I had had to

CARE OF TOURISTS

cope with it that, to be candid, I would have given up my project but for one reason. This was that I was too cowardly to draw back ! Letters of remonstrance from friends had not affected me in the least. It was the lavatory accommodation. One dear old friend had written to me—and her letter was typical of others—in the following terms :

I wonder if *anything* we two could say would stop your *mad* idea of going to Russia. If you go I am quite sure we shall never see you again.

Cowardice won the day, and I set out one afternoon in May, 1934, to arrange about my travel tickets, visa, and other matters. Instead of applying in the usual way to the Soviet travel agency, Intourist, at Bush House, Aldwych, I heard of the Society for Cultural Relations with the U.S.S.R., which is located in Bloomsbury Square. Intourist merely supplies tickets, travellers' cheques, and visas, and arranges for some guide to meet one on arrival at Leningrad, or any other point of arrival. The S.C.R., however, does more than this. In the ordinary course a tourist has a different guide in every place he arrives at, who, after that particular spot has been finished with, places him in the train for his next destination where a fresh guide meets and accompanies him.

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Of course, guides are absolutely indispensable for travellers unacquainted with the Russian language and customs. It is generally believed that the tourist is never for one moment free from the surveillance of the guide. This is a delusion. My guide was, of course, well aware of my antecedents, even if I had not spoken to her freely about them. But I can assure readers that she was at times very glad that she could rest and meet her own friends when her services were not required by me.

I have always been very fond of Russians. There is something about them which has strongly appealed to me, and having been able to understand their points of view in former days had been of the greatest value to me in the course of my official duties. I intended to travel in all the luxury which could be obtained. This would, of course, add very considerably to the expense ; but it meant only that there would be, after my demise, a little less money for somebody else to inherit. Another thing was that I intended to insist on being in the fashion and have a lady guide of attractive personality. I had a feeling that a male guide would be so earnest in his efforts to show me the superiority of the new as compared with the old system that he would be unable to refrain from talking, talking, talking

ARCHBISHOP AND VICAR

until my ears should buzz. Now a lady was sure to be very tactful, if she were the kind of lady I hoped to get hold of. As I have just stated, I am very fond of Russians, but a little anecdote about the late Archbishop Temple will illustrate my meaning. He had gone one day to open something or other. He was met at the railway station by the Archdeacon and the vicar of the parish. Both stood in awe of the Primate, the vicar especially so, and in his nervousness he endeavoured to make conversation. The Archbishop at last could stand it no longer and snapped :

“ If you must talk, talk to the Archdeacon ! ”

But in my case there would not have been the equivalent of an Archdeacon, and I would not have had the nerve to ask my companion to speak only when spoken to. A good deal was known at Bloomsbury Square by the most helpful secretary, Miss Browning, who undertook to arrange not only for a cabin to myself, visa, cheques, and all other odds and ends, but also to ensure that the type of companion which I wanted should meet me at Leningrad and accompany me throughout my travels. I was sure that all other guides meeting me at various places in accordance with the usual custom would all be up to standard, and this proved to be the case. But it would, of course,

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be far pleasanter and also more interesting for me to have the same companion all the time. Long railway journeys by oneself are rather dull, although one always meets interesting people everywhere. At almost the last moment I advanced the date of my departure, for no particular reason, from London. I did not know it at the time, but Chance had decided that the passage from London to Leningrad should prove to be a most interesting one. I made some acquaintanceships which were very useful indeed to me for my purpose.

One reason why I decided to travel by sea from London was that the voyage in a Russian motor-vessel would enable me to brush up my conversational Russian—oil my tongue, in fact. I should also meet Bolsheviks of various sorts and get to learn something about their outlook. Other advantages, not anticipated by me, also fell to my lot.

I embarked punctually on board the *Smolny* at Hay's Wharf, just below London Bridge, at half-past two o'clock on Saturday, June 2, 1934. She did not, however, sail until some hours later. This reminded me pleasantly of the old Russia, where time was of no particular importance. The ship was evidently going to be full of passengers, first, tourist, and third class. The first two categories have the same

AN INTRUDER

saloon and all the same deck privileges, being all the more interesting for me, and the *Smolny* was of a comfortable size, namely, about 4,000 tons. The cabins, saloon, in fact the whole ship was clean, and the first-class accommodation really very good.

Immediately almost after my embarkation, however, something happened which made me wonder whether under the Soviet system a passenger might not have to endure some unexpected inconvenience. On entering my reserved cabin I discovered there a second-class passenger, a Russian, with his baggage which a sailor, who was still present, had placed there. I expostulated, very politely, explaining that the cabin had been reserved for me alone. The sailor did not argue with me, but told the intruder to explain matters.

He said, also quite politely but firmly, that the second-class accommodation was overcrowded and that he had nowhere else to go. He commenced to unpack his bags and had selected the one of the two berths, both lower ones, which I had intended to use myself. There was evidently no satisfaction to be got from him, and the sailor had meanwhile departed. The purser was, of course, very busy with the influx of passengers and their friends; the heaps of baggage in the small second-class

SYSTEM OF TRUSTS

lounge made it in any case difficult to get at him. Unless something should be done quickly to put matters right I felt that I was lost. On the other hand, if the incident was not a very unusual one, it would probably be harmful to interrupt the purser at the moment. I got hold of the chief steward, who happened to be picking his way along ; but he referred me to the purser. Taking my courage in both hands I eventually reached him, and just as he had finished with one of the passengers I laid my case before him. He was promptness personified. He summoned a subordinate, issued orders, and everything was put right in the twinkling of an eye. This was most satisfactory.

Before embarking I had arranged for plenty of cash for tips. In pre-war Russia they were on a scale quite unknown in England. I have no experience of staying in the mansions of newly arrived plutocrats here ; but have been told that in some of them at any rate not less than £5 are expected by some of the upper staff for a week-end visit. But there would certainly be a much larger staff to consider in a great Russian establishment.

An instance may be recorded in this connexion. Some time after the conclusion of the World War I was staying in a country house where I met a Russian lady, a member of one of

A MISTRESS'S LAMENT

the magnates' families. An English lady happened to call one day. Her husband had amassed a vast fortune during the cataclysm, earned high honours from the Crown, and had settled down to the peaceful pursuits of a large landowner. His spouse, on the occasion in question, was dilating on her difficulties as mistress of a great household.

"But," she said, "the difficulties about servants nowadays are enormous. Very high wages, motor-cars, and amusements do not attract the class of servant required. But then, of course, my establishment is so large that the difficulties in this respect are unusually great."

An impish feeling took possession of me. I had some sort of vague idea concerning the size of a large staff, and that of the lady in question was not likely to be anything much out of the common. I asked the Russian visitor what used to be the establishment in her father's household?

"I remember that well," was the reply, "because I managed it for him during my mother's long illness. In the upper servants hall, as you call it in England, there were twenty-seven persons, and forty-six in the lower one!"

The number in the plutocrat's house was not stated; but his wife was visibly taken aback, and the conversation turned to another subject.

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What one usually did was to leave a lump sum, so that those members of a staff who were not seen by a guest, should all get their share. King Edward, however, was very strongly opposed, he told me once, to the tipping system. It was not allowed when I stayed at Sandringham or Balmoral. At the time of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, the Grand Duke Serge of Russia left £50 for the royal staffs. As he was so enormously wealthy and, besides, there was in such matters no Treasury to be considered in Russia, it occurred to me that this was a somewhat meagre sum. The Duke of Connaught had given £100 at Moscow after the Coronation ceremonies in the preceding year, 1896. I brought this to the notice of King Edward, then Prince of Wales, and he said the Grand Duke had given £50 too much.

Before retiring to my cabin on the night of our departure from London in the *Smolny*, I asked a stewardess to do something for me which was a little out of the ordinary run of her duties. She carried out my request with alacrity, and I usually begin by tipping early as a promise of better things to come. But she declined, and explained that personal tips were not accepted. With a few trifling exceptions I found this to be the general rule in Soviet Russia, and profited accordingly. At the end

RUSSIAN SHIPPING

of the voyage one might, if one felt disposed to do so, give a sum to a fund which was utilized for the general benefit of the ship's company by the purchase of books or anything else needed by it. But there was no moral compulsion of any sort. I suppose most passengers dropped something into the box. I did, but it had not been handed round to me. I asked where it was to be found. The idea is, of course, that workers in the U.S.S.R. are guaranteed a certain fixed reward for their labours, and that tipping is not only not required, but tends to favouritism and unfairness.

Contrasting ocean-going vessels of pre-war Russia, which were very clean and comfortable, with those of to-day, if the ships in which I travelled to and from Leningrad may be taken as fair samples, there was no noticeable difference either in accommodation or in the food. The absence of tipping was the most striking feature. There was, however, a great difference in the personnel. In my pre-war voyages the officers and crews were mostly Finnish or Swedish—Russians. Now ships are manned chiefly by Russians. I had no opportunity of comparing the efficiency of the new with the old. I have been in former days in terrific bad weather when the ships' companies were evidently first-class seamen. At the present time

SYSTEM OF TRUSTS

the Soviet vessels do not appear to have had unduly bad luck.

I shall interpolate an instance of naval efficiency in imperial Russia. The Foreign Office used to become alarmed when it heard that a new battleship was to be laid down in the Black Sea, then a closed military lake. As we had then no Naval Attachés permanently appointed for Russia, my advice as a layman used to be asked. I always urged that the Russian Admiralty should be encouraged to lay down as many warships as it could afford, as the sloth of the Russian nature was not likely, in spite of the unquestioned bravery of the crews, to render them very dangerous. I had something more to go upon than my own observation at Black Sea ports. The chief engineer of one of the largest battleships had told me that unless he should continually supervise the care of the machinery the ships would never be able to leave port at all. He was, of course, a Scotsman! I believe that Soviet ships are properly cared for, if only for the reason that Councils probably keep people up to the mark.

There are not yet sufficient Russian ships for the carrying trade. With the exception of the open markets all trade is now practically a government concern. Each great industry is a huge Trust which manages its own affairs, sub-

A TRUST IN DIFFICULTIES

ject, of course, to plans and regulations laid down by the Communist Executive in Moscow. But as the State is supreme, these Trusts, which, of course, contribute enormously to the Treasury receipts, have one great advantage which similar undertakings in this country and elsewhere do not possess.

When one of them is in an early stage of development and has not sufficient funds in reserve for its requirements the Central authority allocates large sums, according to what is required, to it from some other Trust reserve fund. The rate of interest is fixed, and the period during which the loan may run. With us, for example, if, say, a Steel Trust is short of funds which are really needed, the Shell Transport Company would not be likely to meet its requirements with a loan. This certainly appears to favour the Soviet principle. But Trust managements in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics must show very convincing cause why loans should be granted to them.

The Shipping Trust is administered on the same lines as others. I shall take the case of the *Smolny* as an example of the system. A proportion of the net profits is paid into a fund which, when it reaches a sufficiently high figure, is utilized to pay for the building of another new ship. On her voyage from Lenin-

SYSTEM OF TRUSTS

grad, just before I joined her, the *Smolny* had carried a full and profitable cargo to London. Unfortunately for the Shipping Trust the cargo exported from England when I sailed was very small. The net profit on the round voyage was, therefore, certain to be small. But tonnage for the large Russian exports must be available. Pending the Shipping Trust finding itself in a sufficiently favourable financial position, second-hand ships are purchased, and this will, I was told, continue to be the case for a considerable time to come. Owing to the great amount of idle tonnage the Shipping Trust is in a very favourable position. It purchases excellent vessels for extremely low prices. Of course, it is not only more shipping which is required by the U.S.S.R. Facilities for building more are also necessary, so that the drain on the Trust's resources is a very large one. Matters, however, were, I was informed, progressing in a fairly satisfactory manner. The item of repairs and overhauling is too obvious to be more than just mentioned.

CHAPTER VI

SOVIET DISCIPLINE

Soviet Discipline—Education—Finns leave U.S.A. for U.S.S.R.—Russo-Americans visit U.S.S.R.—A Disconcerting Question—The Tsar and Education—Priests and Illiteracy—An anti-Soviet Briton—Lenin's Personality—The White Bread Battle—The Cronstadt Channel—Pobedonostsev Shocked—A Bad Omen—Arrival at Leningrad—Time Unimportant—Landing Formalities—Rail Journeys in U.S.S.R.

IT was most fortunate for my purpose that Chance had decided to bring forward the originally intended date of my departure. The captain of the *Smolny*, whose name is Zuzenko, is a pure Russian, and now middle-aged. His physique is magnificent, and he went to sea, lured by the spirit of adventure, as a lad of fifteen in deep-water sailing ships. When those glorious white wings were finally disappearing from the oceans Zuzenko gave up the sea, as shellbacks would say, and went into steam, transferring later to oil motor-vessels.

I had several conversations with him. In working a ship, managing a factory, handling troops, or in anything requiring efficiency, the actual head for the time being is, in effect, as

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Zuzenko lucidly explained, a dictator. His orders must be unhesitatingly obeyed. A great deal depends, of course, on the personality of the chief and his methods. As he is always in the last resort subservient to the decisions of his Council, a weak or tactless man will be obeyed while discharging the functions of his office. But Nemesis probably awaits him.

It has already been stated that the system is the same throughout the U.S.S.R., as indeed must obviously be the case. We can take as an example a ship at sea. The captain issues an order, important or trivial according to the circumstances. If the ship's company is, on the whole, disposed to differ from him, a meeting, Council, will be held as soon as convenient in order to discuss the matter. If the majority arrive at a conclusion adverse to the giver of the order a resolution to that effect, together with the reasons, will be forwarded on the arrival of the vessel in its terminal port to the Shipping Trust, which will then deal with the case. An instance, which did not, however, affect the captain, who has evidently given general satisfaction for a long time, occurred during my voyage to Leningrad. A breakdown happened to one of the engine-room cylinders, and considerable delay was caused. All the ship's crew attended the Council, including stewards and

INSISTENCE ON EDUCATION

others, although they probably were completely ignorant of anything connected with internal-combustion engines. The conclusion ultimately arrived at, after a lengthy discussion, was that a member of the engine-room staff had been in the first instance to blame for the result. I was informed by a member of the crew that he would certainly be dismissed from his post after arrival at Leningrad.

The point about all this is an important one, for it relates to what is occurring in Russia. The Soviet Government and the Communist Party lay the greatest stress on education, and in endeavouring to get people—especially, of course, the young—to think for themselves. It is maintained, therefore, that the system of Councils not only places proper power in the hands of the mass of workers, but that it is beneficial for the country to do this, because the system is held to develop the intellect and reasoning faculties. In this respect the Soviet Government has copied the example of Mr. Gladstone. Many years ago, before most persons now living were born, there was a fierce struggle going on in England about the advisability of granting parliamentary electoral rights to agricultural labourers. Great numbers of them were, of course, totally illiterate. But Mr. Gladstone argued rightly that we can all

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learn something from other workers, even when these can neither read nor write. It is not, however, as we all are aware, the case that every student is able intellectually to assimilate what he has studied. But to judge by the immense output of useful books, and the attention paid to the contents of newspapers, there is undoubtedly a real desire for knowledge, especially on the part of the rising generation and young persons of both sexes who are grown up.

I conversed with various members of the *Smolny's* crew. They were all perfectly courteous, but not gushing. They took people as they found them. A well-educated English girl, about eighteen years of age, was on board. She was proceeding to Moscow, where she intended to undergo a course of study for two years at some college. She was evidently comfortably off, and by no means a fanatic. But she must be a rarity in the line she had chosen for herself.

What was far more interesting for me, who had known imperial Russia, was the presence on board of several youngish Finns, some of them married, who were American citizens, and all sons of Finnish immigrants into the United States of America. In the earlier years of the present century the Russian Imperial Government, by a stroke of amazing stupidity,

IMPERIAL RUSSIA AND FINLAND

entirely alienated the Finnish people. To explain properly the position of the American Finns on board the *Smolny* it is necessary to say something about the former status of the Grand Duchy of Finland, as it was officially termed. Russia had no real claim to it; but acquired it at the time of the Napoleonic wars. The Grand Duchy was expressly granted practical autonomy; it had its own laws, coinage, and various privileges. Incidentally it also provided Russia with her finest seamen, of whom there has always been a great lack in that country.

At last nothing would suit the Imperial Government except the attempt at Russification of the Grand Duchy. But the Finns are a somewhat dour and very tenacious race. They boycotted Russia, and great numbers emigrated to the United States—itsself rather mistakenly termed the land of Freedom—where they settled, became prosperous, and their children were entirely American and most valuable citizens. The last thing one would have expected was that any of these Finns by descent should think of taking service under the Soviet Government, whose methods are continually being described in the American Press as infinitely worse than anything under the imperial régime.

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These American citizens on board the *Smolny* had been engaged in various occupations in the United States, and I entered into conversation with some of them. They told me that the real state of affairs in that country is not generally known. They were calm in their descriptions, but quite clear. Their estimate was that in June, 1934, there were still some sixteen million persons out of work, while those dependent on them raised the total of more or less destitute people to a figure not far short of half the total population. Great numbers were, I was informed, entirely destitute, living on scraps or charity.

One of my informants had been a ship's officer on one of the large vessels trading on the Great Lakes. Ever since the first financial crash of October, 1929, conditions had become almost unbearable. Wages were, when obtainable, the merest pittance as compared with former days, and by themselves alone, if one had no savings, it was not possible to live in reasonable comfort.

They were all convinced that the present capitalist system in the United States cannot endure much longer, because, they declared, Labour has now found its power and means to exercise it. Great strikes on a vast scale in the near future were predicted, and duly hap-

FINNS CONTRACT WITH U.S.S.R.

pened. The situation is rendered the more difficult on account of the many different races in the great republic of the West.

These informants of mine had studied, as far as they had been able to do so, the situation and conditions in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and they were all very level-headed people. These Finns, therefore, had signed contracts to work for the Soviet Government, principally in lumber camps, but elsewhere as arranged. The contracts were for two years. When I asked some of the men whether they might eventually relinquish their American citizenship and become Russian subjects, the answer was that if things should turn out as they hoped they would, and indeed expected, they would certainly make the great change.

Even more interesting for my purpose was the presence on board of a number of another type of American citizen. They had emigrated from Russia, chiefly from the Ukraine, a region I had already decided to visit, years, sometimes very many years ago. They had come from poor surroundings and were, when I made their acquaintance, all business or professional men, attorneys, dentists—various occupations, in fact. Most of them were married and had brought their families with them, a fact which showed how prosperous they still were

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even in these days of distress in the United States, for their tours must have cost each family several hundreds of pounds. One dear little girl, aged eleven, Miriam Gevirman, played the piano most beautifully and is evidently a musical genius. Her parents are Jewish.

My good goddess, Chance, had indeed been kind when she caused me to start earlier than I had intended. These families each went their own ways after arrival at Leningrad and it was, for most of them, their first visit to their native land. The children were of young school age. There had always been considerable discontent in the Ukraine in pre-war Russia, because it was forbidden to teach Ukrainian in the schools, and I think also there was, and maybe still is, a tendency among Ukrainians to be against any government, actually in power, on principle. But I do not know, and the subject is outside the ambit of these pages. To-day, of course, in the Ukraine its own language is the official one.

It was extremely interesting to make the acquaintance of these returning emigrants before they should have seen for themselves how the Revolution was progressing. My good fortune was enhanced by the fact that I met some of them later during my travels. They

AN EMBARRASSING QUESTION

were all strong adherents of the Soviet system, *for Russia*, although they were aware that life, generally speaking, is hard, and must continue so until the fruits of the system shall be more bounteous. The Soviet authorities do not attempt to minimize or disguise the fact. A backward people like the Russians is by its very lethargy an obstacle to progress until the young shall have realized the benefits of progress.

My relations with several of these tourists were very friendly, as will be seen by a little incident. A little boy, about eleven or twelve years old, had made friends with me. One evening, when we were at dinner in the saloon, the little man, who was seated at a table with his parents not far from mine, called out during one of those silences which sometimes occur to disconcert one :

“What great deed did you do in the War, General?”

Every ear was cocked to hear me relate my outstanding deed of heroism. One could have heard the proverbial pin falling through the air. Alas ! I had to confess that I had never during the whole of a very long life done anything approaching a deed worthy of any particular laudable notice at all. The father explained later to me that he had been to blame, but was

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sure—true Russian politeness—that my modesty had made me cover up my tracks. His son had asked him what line of business I was in, and had been told that I was a general, it being added that a general must have performed a deed worthy of his rank in order to have acquired it. The son desired some details. I did not explain that a British Brigadier-General has no counterpart on earth. But this is beside the point of this volume. Our good relations were in no way impaired.

These visiting Russians had been in the habit of sending remittances from time to time to their relations, who, they knew, must be sorely pinched since practically all trade had become a government monopoly. One of them was declaiming one day very bitterly against the unfortunate Emperor Nicholas. He ascribed to his Majesty innate cruelty instead of, as was actually the case, weakness of character.

I mentioned once to my acquaintance that while I had been with the Emperor at his General Headquarters in the field in the year 1916, I had asked him one day why he had never introduced into his dominions a simple, but sound system of elementary education. On that particular morning, during my forenoon ride, I had looked in at a village school. The old system of instruction was going on, and

“CHURCH TOO STRONG FOR ME”

fairy tales of the most ridiculous kind, intended to terrify the people about their future life unless they should obey the priests, were taught. The Emperor Nicholas quite agreed with me. He said that he had made the attempt on two occasions before the War, but “The Church was too strong for me.” He meant that, if he had persisted, the priesthood would have organized a Palace Revolution, which would have cost the Tsar at least his throne and probably his life. Not that he was ever afraid of this latter contingency. In reply, my acquaintance, representing no doubt the general attitude of critics, who have never known the person whom they condemn, exclaimed :

“ He was a liar ! Education was the very last thing he desired. He wanted to keep the people ignorant and so ensure his despotism.”

The Orthodox Church certainly pursued this policy, and the poor Empress also supported it. With the dead weight of an immovable bureaucracy there was no room for progress.

The Soviet motor-vessels pass through the Kiel canal which has been much improved since I had last been in it in the year 1905. At some of the larger places schoolchildren had been brought to see ships passing through. When our craft was discovered to be a Red one, the youngsters with one accord exclaimed :

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“Heil, Hitler!” This invariably infuriated a Red passenger, who made scathing repartees in return, and was further incensed when the imps, with a sense of humour, only laughed at him.

There was also an Englishman on board, who appeared to live chiefly in the United States. What the object of his visit to the U.S.S.R. was I did not exactly discover. On the whole it seemed to me that he was antagonistic to the Soviet régime. One evening in the saloon after dinner several passengers had arranged that the captain, Zuzenko, should attend to answer any questions. He happened to mention the fact that every person, male or female, should, if physically fit, either work or at any rate be prepared to work if called upon. The Englishman in question had a number of conundrums, all of which were answered lucidly. At last he came to the problem of those priests of the Orthodox Church—and they are, of course, the great majority—whose religious occupation has vanished, their services being no longer required. Captain Zuzenko replied:

“Why, they work like anybody else.”

“Do you really mean to say that a man, who has been brought up and who has practised as a priest, must work for his living just like other people?”

“To be sure,” was the answer.

LENIN AND CHILDREN

“Well, all I can say is that it is a most barbarous proceeding.”

The questioner then allowed the matter to drop. Captain Zuzenko did not attempt to paint a picture of Russia since the Revolution in bright colours. I had heard reports of cannibalism during the Civil War and Allied intervention. These were confirmed by Bolshevik Russians during my travels. In the Volga region some mothers even devoured their own children.

Zuzenko had been very well acquainted with Lenin, who was of pure Russian descent, a small landowner and without any trace of Semitic blood. He had adopted the name of Lenin. One would regard him as a somewhat repellent figure apart from his greatness. But he must in some respects have had a remarkably attractive personality. Children, like dogs, have penetrating discernment, and they adored him. Zuzenko once attended as a delegate some conference in Moscow at which Lenin was present. The two were already well acquainted with each other, and during the course of conversation the Dictator learned that Zuzenko's wife and baby girl were present. He made their acquaintance, and the child, who had hitherto always vehemently repelled any advances from strangers, at once opened its arms to Lenin.

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Zuzenko told me a very interesting story about what is termed the "White Bread" battle. It took place during the Allied intervention. Food in the great cities, especially in Leningrad, had been for some time almost unobtainable, and the bread ration had been reduced to two ounces-daily. But even this meagre amount was not always available for issue to the starving inhabitants. A handful of corn would be given out in its place ; but the recipients, being town dwellers, did not know how to make the best use of it. They often just munched it.

While people were in these desperate straits the Allied advisers with Denikin had a bright idea. His forces were, of course, well provided, partly by the Allies and partly by plundering their fellow-countrymen, with everything they needed as regards food, and indeed everything else. A great number of propaganda labels were, therefore, prepared and fastened to loaves of white bread when the opposing armies were close in front of each other. The loaves were then flung into the Red lines, and the labels informed the Red troops that plenty was awaiting them and everybody else if only they would be sensible and abandon further resistance. The Red army was at the time suffering great distress also from hunger. In fact, it had been on the point of dissolution when this special

WHITE BREAD BATTLE

propaganda was started. It had an entirely unexpected effect. The Red troops were so infuriated that they attacked and routed Denikin's force, and his career as a restorer of civilization and freedom soon came to an inglorious end.

The admirably managed Kiel canal caused no delays, and we ploughed our way quietly along towards Leningrad. Owing to the breakdown in the engine-room we were several hours late in reaching Cronstadt, the fortifications of which appeared to me to be in a somewhat dilapidated condition. But as the channel is a very narrow one, it is undoubtedly quite sufficiently protected by mines. When the Duke of Connaught arrived from Denmark in the royal yacht for the Coronation festivities at Moscow in 1896, it was thought on board that there might be a chance of taking soundings in the channel. As soon as the pilot came on board, however, the first words he uttered were : " All leadsmen out of the chains ! "

It was a lovely June evening as we approached Leningrad, and, of course, in that latitude quite light all night. It was pathetic for me to see some of the imperial palaces on the borders of the Gulf of Finland. In former days I had been a guest in one of them for several days. In another I had attended the marriage of the Tsar's sister, the Grand Duchess Xenia.

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In my room in the first palace the walls were covered with some very daring oil paintings on a large scale. I was told that shortly before my visit the Procurator of the Holy Synod, a civilian, M. Pobedonostsev, an ascetic who would have cheerfully burnt one for the good of one's soul, had also occupied it. He was so shocked at the paintings, especially one which stared at him from the foot of the bed, that he demanded they should all be instantly draped, and, he hoped, finally destroyed.

On the occasion of the marriage of the Grand Duchess Xenia to the Grand Duke Alexander Michaelovich, just forty years ago, something happened which made the superstitious Russians regard it as a bad omen. After the ceremony and banquet the newly married pair drove off in an open carriage for the small palace at Ropsha, where a former emperor had been assassinated. On the way thither one of the horses became frightened at something, dashed to one side, dragging the other with it, and the vehicle landed in a ditch. But no injury was done to the occupants. There was a lot of talk about this afterwards.

The *Smolny* arrived at Leningrad about ten o'clock at night, and we had to sleep on board until the following morning as the Customs officials had departed for the night. We turned

TIME UNIMPORTANT .

out at a rather early hour on the next day in order to undergo the Customs examination, regain our passports, which had been taken from us on embarkation, and make the acquaintance of our guides. The passports were, of course, in perfect order, otherwise we would not have been allowed to come on board.

Time was not, and is not, as already mentioned, a factor of much importance either in imperial Russia or in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. But one always had to be, as the Americans say, on time for an appointment. In this respect the same thing used to occur in England. Troops would be assembled on parade at far too early an hour, and stand there dawdling. The time when the Customs officials would be ready to commence their examination must, of course, have been well known. With the exception of a gendarme, nobody in authority appeared for about a couple of hours after we had landed and had been gathered into a very comfortable waiting and refreshment room. There was plenty of literature about the U.S.S.R. on the tables.

The examination of luggage always took a long time under the old as well as under the new system. This was, of course, necessary as the tariff wall was such a very high one. Nowadays the hunt for forbidden literature is

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fairly exhaustive. Passengers were admitted to the ordeal room in twos or threes at a time. This was a sound plan and obviated any crowding, as the place itself was on the small side with the usual counter. But all things come to an end, and in due course I was passed with all my few belongings.

The guide interpreters were waiting to take care of their charges in the Customs room as soon as the formalities had been carried out. One guide would be allotted to a whole party of tourists not exceeding, I think, a dozen, so that each traveller can get proper attention. Or an individual tourist, like myself, could have a guide to himself on payment of the extra expense. In my case, as I have already stated, I had gone a step further, and arranged for the luxury of a travelling companion throughout. I never have joined a touring party anywhere. Different persons have different tastes, and I am sure many things which attract tourists would not interest me, and vice versa. Moreover, fixed hours, or rather minutes, for sight-seeing must be somewhat wearisome. In any case, if I wanted to see places not visited by tourists my journey had to be a solitary one.

Nor would I have gone without a companion. It has been mentioned that the English Press had from time to time enlarged on the tremen-

MY GUIDE

dous difficulty of railway travel in the U.S.S.R. But one ought to be just : I had read a good deal on this subject in the Soviet official newspapers. In old days crowds always assembled in too much good time before a journey ; sometimes overnight. The system of issuing tickets was slow, and likely to be so still. The fact is that my innate laziness made me long to be freed from all trouble and difficulty in arranging journeys. As money could effect this I was saved a great deal of very tiring worry.

When my guide, Madame Nadejda Viktorovna Kaplinskaya, introduced herself to me in the Customs room I saw at once that a better selection so far as I was concerned could not possibly have been made. I need not describe her in detail. She was charming and remained so until we parted on my embarkation at Leningrad. The affectionate diminutive of Nadejda, which is the Russian word for Hope, is Nadya, and this at once came quite naturally to me. As a most devoted but mistaken mother had persuaded her adoring husband not to give me just one working English Christian name I always adopted, when in Russia, that of my father, Edward. In Russia I was, therefore, invariably Dmitri Dmitrovich, meaning Edward the son of Edward. Nadya and I took to each other at once.

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Coming with me to distant parts of Russia would be a great and indeed pleasant change for her from conducting tourists in parties or individually over the regulation sights of Leningrad and its environs. She was also likely, as events afterwards showed, to learn something about her own country which she had not experienced before. She is old enough to remember imperial Russia.

As soon as the Customs formalities were concluded we entered a gorgeous limousine of American make, which represented part of my luxury travelling. In all places to which the ordinary tourist is taken automobiles are provided for his use either individually or in parties. Elsewhere one has to make the best arrangements one can, as a case in point later on shall demonstrate. We drove to the Astoria, where a most comfortable suite consisting of bedroom, sitting-room, and bathroom was ready for me. But I saw another suite which pleased me even better, and so my luggage was transferred to it. As the weather was fine, I set out on a ramble on foot before luncheon by myself instead of using the motor-car.

My Nadya had already been commissioned by me to arrange for seats in a slow train to the south, leaving Leningrad on the following day. As a matter of fact it was not necessary for me

CHOICE OF ROUTE

to specify a slow train, stopping at nearly all stations, often for considerable periods of time, because on that particular route there were no fast ones. If I had disembarked on the previous day I would have advanced my departure for the south accordingly. This was no longer possible. By the time I was dressed for the day there was not sufficient time for me to visit the agency offices to inform them of my next destination, and, having done that myself or by deputy, to get to the station of departure, which was some distance from the Astoria, to find, in all probability, that all the "soft" seats had been already sold out. Besides, I was in no particular hurry, and could please myself.

Critics will probably say at once that the mere fact that I had to inform the tourist authorities in Leningrad of my next destination shows that surveillance over my every movement would not be relaxed for a moment. It is my fault. I ought to have recollected that these pages are for those who wish to learn something about the U.S.S.R., and who have not my knowledge of Russia. On arriving in Leningrad, and thinking matters over, I decided to get the unpleasant part of my travels over first as far as possible.

I finally decided, therefore, to visit a large city where tourists are not taken because the

SOVIET DISCIPLINE

accommodation for them is quite unsuitable, owing to the complete absence of decent hotel accommodation. It was, therefore, necessary for my purse-bearer to procure Russian currency roubles in notes, as cab-drivers and other small people would probably not understand that, say, a florin in English money, which they had never seen or heard of, was the equivalent of a very substantial figure in paper roubles.

CHAPTER VII

WORKERS WHO ARE NOT WORKERS

Workers who are not Workers—Domestic Servants—Dates instead of Days—The "Day Out"—An Over-worked Waitress—Leningrad's Empty Streets—Shopping in U.S.S.R.—Russian and Foreign Money—Points of Resemblance—Courtesy of Populace—Driving Force Necessary—Instance of Psychology—The Soviet and War—Russo-Japanese Tension—The Soviet Principle

THE Astoria is the leading hotel in Leningrad. It was opened not long before the outbreak of the World War, and, during its course, was frequented chiefly by foreign officers and some others. It was closed down during the revolutionary troubles, and owing to absence of business had been reopened not long before my visit in 1934. It was a great improvement on any of its predecessors, and at the time of my stay in it was sumptuously furnished with pieces taken from palaces or from the houses of some former magnates. No doubt some of the furniture was out of place in a bedroom; but this arrangement was much cheaper than the cost of making new things.

In imperial Russia the staff in high-class hotels

WORKERS WHO ARE NOT WORKERS

was composed of Tatars. Men of their race had been chosen, because they neither drank nor smoked and were scrupulously honest. Each waiter in the restaurant part paid one or two roubles, according to the importance of the place, monthly into a breakage fund. The wages were, so some old Tatar waiters had told me years before, negligible ; their income consisted almost entirely of tips, and very well they did on them.

Things are different to-day. Some Tatar waiters are employed in the public part of a restaurant ; but otherwise the staff consists of maids, mostly young, very neatly dressed and pleasant to talk to. At luncheon on the day of my arrival I learned something about Soviet habits and customs. In the first place it should be stated that everybody capable of work is a worker. There is, however, one very large class, namely the peasantry, male and female, on the Collective farms. They undoubtedly do work and work hard. But in the U.S.S.R. they are not termed " Workers " ! The explanation is that they do not receive any wages as in the case of the others. They share between them the income of their collective farms in produce as well as in money. We can leave these people for the present.

Before going to the U.S.S.R. I had tried to

DOMESTIC SERVANTS IN U.S.S.R.

place myself mentally in the position of a Soviet domestic servant. I had read nothing about this class of the community in the Russian newspapers, but somehow felt that in a proletarian country the word "servant" would be out of place. One of the first questions, therefore, which I put to Nadya was about this problem. She informed me that my surmise was right. What we term a servant is expressed to-day in the U.S.S.R. by the expression "serving personnel", to translate the phrase literally, or "domestic worker". There is no suggestion of inferiority in the word "worker". As a matter of fact, I used the proper expression only when discussing certain things concerning them with others.

I was already aware, before leaving England, that our week of seven days had been abolished. In fact, one does not speak of the days of the week as with us, possibly—I do not know, for I forgot to ask, and after all it does not matter—because of the wish to avoid mention of "Sunday" and get the older people to abandon the use of the word. One speaks of the date instead. The working week of five days is followed by the sixth, which is termed the "day out", to translate the phrase literally. Probably it was copied from us, where the expression is so well known to every housewife! Here

WORKERS WHO ARE NOT WORKERS again, however, is a snag for those who desire to learn about the U.S.S.R.

Tourists, some of them eminent professors, after a brief sojourn in Russia, but who were not acquainted either with the imperial régime or with the language, have lectured and pointed out that the "day out", or "holiday" as they term it, is a fiction. They agree that by law every sixth day is to be regarded as a holiday. But, they say, in practice this is not the case, generally speaking, because when a worker's five-days' task is completed, he must give free labour elsewhere. There is, it is admitted, no legal compulsion for him or her to do this; but the moral obligation is so strong that it cannot be disregarded. If it is the lazybones will be made to suffer for his sloth in some more or less unpleasant manner. These travellers unintentionally confused Communists with ordinary Russians.

A very attractive girl, whom I judged to be about eighteen years of age, was my waitress when I stayed at the Astoria. Being always anxious to learn, I entered into conversation with her, for Nadya had gone to her home, consisting of one room, to see her husband. They have no children. The waitress had told me that she had had her "day out" three days previously. I asked her to make some arrange-

A HARD - WORKED WAITRESS

ment or other for me about afternoon tea, as I expected a guest or two. She replied that she would pass on my instructions to another girl, also very attractive, as she herself would have gone off duty by tea-time and would not be working on the morrow. "But," I exclaimed, "everybody talks so much about work, work, work in the U.S.S.R., and here you are in a delightful situation, seeing all sorts of people, and yet you are going to have another holiday so very soon after the last one."

"Well," she replied, "it's like this. I work longer hours here than the regulation time of seven hours, and so my 'day out' comes round more often."

"That is very nice for you," I remarked, "and I hope you will have a pleasant holiday, and that I shall see you again on my return."

"Oh," she said, "it's no holiday for me. I have a baby eighteen months old, my husband is ill, and there is all the scrubbing of the apartment to be done."

"How old are you?"

"Twenty-six."

"Anyhow, hard labour seems to agree with you. How do you manage about your baby when you are working?"

"I keep a nurse for him," she answered.

The salary or wages were evidently satis-

WORKERS WHO ARE NOT WORKERS

factory. I asked her to accept some English silver with which to buy her beloved some toy, of which a very good variety is made in Russia. She demurred at first to taking money, but she saw that as I might not have an opportunity of buying something myself for the infant she accepted it in the spirit in which it was offered. Such a charming little Bolshevik, as were indeed the others. Most obliging and thoughtful. But she was not a Communist. The Communists certainly do work very strenuously and are enthusiastic about helping development. Of course, as everywhere else, there is bound to be a good deal of misplaced zeal, especially in a country like Russia, where the people had been kept so backward.

The first thing that struck me about Leningrad in the daytime was the comparative emptiness of the streets. The population there, as in other towns, has swollen enormously, no doubt due to the wish for a change from the drab prairie life to that of the towns. In fact, the authorities have had to place substantial obstacles in the path of this ever-growing influx into cities where sufficient accommodation for far smaller numbers is not yet available. The relatively few passers-by were not idlers, but were going about their daily business. In the evening the streets were very well filled, at

SHOPPING THEN AND NOW

least the principal ones, and the motor-buses were crammed morning and evening.

There were fewer shops than formerly, as one would in the circumstances expect. Those which attracted by far the most patronage were the provision shops. I do not know how the takings of these and other establishments are checked—they were practically all government ones—but calculating machines were in frequent use. I cannot say whether all the takings were passed through the machines; but so far as my experience in the U.S.S.R. went everybody was scrupulously honest.

It will be as well to describe here the mode of shopping in the U.S.S.R. to-day. In imperial Russia, with one or two trifling exceptions in St. Petersburg, one bargained when purchasing goods. In fact, the system was the same as in the East, only, of course, minutes took the place of days, weeks, or even months. In the new Russia this, to me detestable, practice has been abolished. Prices are fixed and one takes or leaves. There are two kinds of shops. One is called the Torgsin where foreign currency only is accepted. Prices are on the whole high, but sometimes really low according to our ideas. The other class of shop handles only Russian currency. The difference in actual value between the two kinds of money is almost

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fantastic, as will be seen when the question of, for example, a cab fare arises. But the prices are fixed. One knows exactly where one stands. The Russian much prefers to have foreign money, if he can get it, for, as already explained, it goes a great deal further.

It is not really possible to compare the values of the two kinds of money, foreign and Russian currency, for there is no common basis of comparison. A man may be earning as much or more than a Minister of State in imperial Russia—the latter had, it is true, usually an official residence largely maintained for him and table money—and yet be unable to afford to buy a pound of butter. I shall, of course, refer to this later on in these pages.

There is one point in common—and indeed more than one—between the old and the new Russia. In the principal cities the streets are well watered more than once daily at suitable seasons of the year. In old days Russians, acquainted with our metropolis, used with justice to chaff one about our dusty streets. But we had other more tangible advantages. A smart shower of rain came on while I was strolling about Leningrad and I saw only one umbrella. The explanation is that money is required at present for more important purposes. The clothing of the men was about the

GENERAL COURTESY

same as in former days, namely, of poor quality. I cannot speak of the quality of women's dress, for I am ignorant on the subject. But certainly, when the day's work was done, they were neatly, and very often very attractively dressed. Nothing drab, and the people on the whole everywhere seemed contented. There were, of course, many exceptions.

Leningrad to-day is certainly dull in appearance as compared with its former general gaiety. But in former days one usually saw only the principal residential or shopping streets, and not the horrid squalor, dirt, and distress. The distress to-day in the U.S.S.R. is largely due to the wretched surroundings, legacies of former times. There is another cause to be referred to later—namely, insufficient means.

People were very civil in Leningrad, and everywhere else, if one asked for information. None of them seemed to resent the presence of a well-dressed foreigner. We must always bear in mind, however, that the old courtesy and psychology still exist among the great mass of Russians, and must, as Soviet authorities also told me themselves, be taken into account in all the Soviet's plans. Terrific driving force is necessary to instil a new outlook and love of work for work's sake. Education is to do it.

An instance of Russian psychology may be

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cited. I was staying once in the house of a magnate. I had gone there in the belief that my visit would last for a few days. But somehow the family took a liking to me, and I spent several months before departing. One evening at dinner a message came to my host to say that a large bear had been located on a part of his estate, about forty miles distant. He was a great sportsman, and asked to be excused for leaving us. Presently he returned and said he expected to return late on the following afternoon. We were very intimate, and I said: "Well, good luck, old chap." He immediately thrust his rifle into a corner of the room and exclaimed:

"Well, you've done it now. There's no use in my going."

I had thought I was fairly well acquainted by then with Russian superstitions, but was evidently mistaken. I enquired what my blunder was. My friend replied:

"I should have thought you were by now sufficiently acquainted with Russia to know that to wish a person good luck in an undertaking is sure to prevent its coming off."

Expressing my sincere contrition, I had a brain wave and said that, as I was a foreigner and not a member of the Orthodox Church, my error would probably not affect the result.

U.S.S.R. NOT AGGRESSIVE

He was very doubtful, but eventually started. He returned on the following afternoon, convinced that my unlucky observation had ruined everything. All the conditions had been supremely favourable. But by some extraordinary mischance the bear had escaped unscathed. He was a man who had been everywhere and knew half a dozen languages. It is not, therefore, to be expected, as the Soviet authorities themselves have told me, that the old Adam should be exorcised within the space of a very few years. There are a good many superstitions rampant in cultured circles in England. But the drivers, the Communist Party, are never down-hearted. The hostility of some foreign Powers, open or disguised, and efforts to create rebellion within the borders of the U.S.S.R. have also caused considerable delay. But this factor is now, I think, quite unimportant.

It is a common belief in some influential quarters in this country that the U.S.S.R. is looking for a pretext to forward its principles by force of arms. I never credited this belief. When Poland, in 1920, made war on the U.S.S.R. her forces were quickly routed. Warsaw would have fallen an easy prey if the Russian army had been efficiently led. There was more than one imperial general of my acquaintance who could have captured the Polish capital. But

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a man of different calibre was appointed Commander-in-Chief. It was feared at Moscow that a really good commander might, backed by a victorious army, decide to put the Soviet out of business and instal himself in its place.

In the earlier months of the year 1934 relations between the Soviet Government and Japan were so strained by the actions of the latter Power that hostilities were really expected at Moscow in the near future. Great expense was, of course, incurred in rushing troops, aircraft, and stores to the Far East. Presently things settled down. The Japanese learned that the Russians had concentrated a magnificent fleet of big bombers at Vladivostok, whence Tokyo could be bombarded within two and one-half hours. As there is a great number of flimsy buildings in the Japanese capital its Government, as a high Soviet official told me, wisely chose the line of least resistance and turned its looks southwards, remembering the provocation given by the supremely silly arms embargo of Mr. MacDonald's Government, which is not likely to be forgotten in spite of honeyed phrases.

It must surely be obvious to impartial minds that war is the very last thing which the Soviet Government desires, even a very successful

THE DISARMAMENT PROBLEM

war. It would still further immensely delay internal reconstruction, because the Soviet Government wants all its resources for developing its new social system. Litvinov, therefore, must have been absolutely sincere when he advocated at Geneva, some few years ago, practically total disarmament. Meanwhile, the U.S.S.R. is compelled to maintain a great—and so far as I could judge very efficient—army. Otherwise it would be put out of business by other Powers. The Soviet believes that its principle—not necessarily its methods—will in time be adopted by Western lands. Some American capitalists think so too. The principle being that every deserving person shall have enough before others have more than they need, meaning, of course, the communal ownership of the means of production as opposed to their private ownership by the few.

CHAPTER VIII

HYGIENE

Nasty Companions—"Hard" and "Soft" Seats—Death-dealing Oysters—Crowds at Railway Stations—Start for Mogilov—New Names for Old—Expert Young Thieves—Journey to Mogilov—I Frighten Nadya—Fellow-Passengers—Hospital Treatment—Prices in Currency—Lavatory Accommodation—Hotel at Tiflis—Hygiene in England—Heavy Freight Traffic—The Lady Conductor—Arrive at Mogilov

I WISHED to make the acquaintance of the head of the tourist agency in Leningrad. Accompanied by Nadya, I called upon him and found him, as was to be expected, most agreeable. When I explained that I wished first of all to make for Mogilov, where I had been with the Tsar in the year 1916, he asked me whether I had any experience of Russian provincial hotels. This was a subject on which I could dilate with a great deal of first-hand knowledge, more probably than he had, at any rate as much. A good many years ago I was in a Russian inn, having arrived late at night. Some other persons were in the living-room. I felt tired after a long day; but noticed the peculiar colour of the walls, brown of slightly

PEACEFUL VERMIN

varying shades. On closer inspection I realized that bugs covered literally every inch of the walls. It was to be my resting-place until morning, and I remarked on the fact to a fellow-traveller. He said he knew the place well, and while the sight was extremely rare, if not unique, he went on :

“ But they are very peaceful ones ! ”

I do not know the reason ; but he was right. I have known more fierce ones. The head of the tourist bureau explained that besides the absence of any suitable accommodation at Mogilov the agency had not even an automobile in places like that. This had been, of course, foreseen by me ; but there was sure to be some means of transport. The arrangements about my tickets would be rather complicated, for seats could not, of course, be reserved at an intermediate station, and as the trains were very few in number one might be unable to get anything better than the “ hard ” seats as the cheaper class of accommodation is termed. But the agent undertook to arrange this if I would give him the date of my departure from Mogilov to wherever my next destination would be. All I had to do was to pay another two fares, for myself and Nadya, from Leningrad. It would be well worth the extra expense to make sure, and events justified it. “ Soft ”

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travelling in the U.S.S.R. is costly because the distances are so great. In imperial Russia one thought nothing of driving fifty or sixty miles when away from the railway to dine and sleep. If one was very keen on somebody at the other end, several times that distance would not prevent a visit for a long week-end.

On the very morning of my arrival at the hotel in Leningrad I felt something like a very tiny pimple at the tip of my nose, just inside it. I thought nothing of it, for my health had been splendid, but it was to cause me a good deal of trouble during my travels. It certainly could not have been caused by a Russian germ, but nobody believed me when I returned to England. I think some people had the idea that a germ had been specially prepared for me beforehand. This reminds me of the unfortunate French statesman, M. Malvy, I think it was. He had enjoyed a good dinner including some oysters about a couple of years or so ago. He was taken ill and died from the effects of at least one bad oyster. M. Léon Daudet, the well-known French journalist, openly accused, not only the Germans of having sent the specially prepared bivalve, but also the French Criminal Investigation Department of hushing up the crime. It had, said Daudet, been bribed. His paper, the royalist *Action Française*, sold

PURCHASE OF RAILWAY TICKETS

tremendous numbers of copies. Daudet did not, of course, explain how the Germans could ensure the consumption of that particular lot of oysters by the unfortunate man.

On the forenoon after my arrival in Leningrad I rambled about the city while Nadya was busy with preparations for our journey to Mogilov, which would last, if the train should be punctual, about eighteen hours or so. She was rather tired when we met to go to the station. The matter of actually getting tickets had been, she told me, a strenuous affair. The crowd was so dense and the issue of tickets from the one little window in the booking office so very slow. But she had triumphed over all obstacles and felt proud of her success. The tourist agency was going to arrange about the subsequent reservation from Mogilov.

I had, after due consideration, decided that Kiev should be my next destination. The system being, as already explained, the same everywhere, there would be no object in my rushing great distances to see the same thing elsewhere. It would have meant tiring oneself out to no purpose, besides spending a lot of money unnecessarily. The length of my stay at Kiev would, of course, depend upon the circumstances of the moment. If I should find what I wished to see there and so be able to

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compare it with, for example, Mogilov, the purpose of my visit would be fulfilled. I was heartily glad that I had somebody to act as courier for me, especially when we arrived at the departure station in Leningrad. There was a seething mass of humanity.

This terminus used to be called in old days the Tsarskoe Selo (Imperial Village) station, for it was from it that one started for the Emperor's palace, his constant residence ever since the revolutionary troubles of the year 1905, when so many people were massacred near the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg. It was the unfortunate and misguided Empress, Alexandra Feodorovna, who persuaded the Tsar to abandon his capital. Names of streets and buildings closely connected with the former imperial régime have been changed to something more in keeping with the present system. Tsarskoe Selo is now called Dyetskoe Selo, or Children's Village. I believe the Emperor's palace is kept up as a museum. I had been to see him there on some occasions.

Somebody had warned me to be very careful in looking after my luggage when getting out of the motor-car on arrival at the terminus. It was said that street urchins were remarkably expert in making off with quite large packages. In a fraction of a second they had vanished with

“HARD” AND “SOFT”

your property in the crowd of bystanders. I never lost anything. Nadya was not aware of this peril. She had had few opportunities for travel and then one very small case, which she kept in her hand, sufficed for her needs. Although we had arrived in very good time so as to allow for all possible contingencies the other two seats in our compartment were already occupied.

These “soft” compartments are like our third-class sleepers to the North. In the daytime the two upper berths are folded down and each side of the compartment seats two persons. In the “hard” compartments passengers are much more crowded, but they really rather like it, just as a crammed charabanc in England is a great attraction for a village outing. Russians, and people generally in countries where there is no free allowance of baggage, are somewhat vague about “hand luggage”. The nets in continental coaches are of much greater dimensions than with us; but even so they will not hold the equivalent of a Saratoga trunk. Fortunately our fellow-passengers’ baggage was of relatively small dimensions, although one of them was setting out on a three-days’ journey to Odessa in order to save the expense of changing stations at Moscow. Our food supplies for two days, with liquids, also took up some space.

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My intention to travel by a slow train—there were no sleeping-compartments on that particular route—had been dictated by the desire to see as much as possible of the country through which I should pass and especially of the inhabitants. In the old and in the new Russia the arrival of a train is an excitement for the local population. Also the halts of a slow train are longer, and occur, of course, far more frequently than with a fast one. This was at first a cause of alarm for Nadya. Trains in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics move off with less ceremony and bell-ringing than formerly was the case. I was not aware of this fact until, after about three-quarters of an hour after leaving Leningrad, I turned round and happened to see my train moving off. No doubt I would have heard it before the whole of it should have passed me, and there is communication between all the carriages like our corridor trains. But as I climbed into the train I noticed Nadya waving and calling frantically to me.

She was terrified lest I should be left behind. And there was good reason for her worry. She had all my tickets. I had retained only my passport which never left me until, in accordance with the invariable rule for everybody, Russian or foreign, it was delivered up at any

MY GUIDE ALARMED

place where I intended to pass the night. Nadya indeed begged me to take my tickets unless I would promise not to leave the train again until we should reach our destination on the following morning. This was about three o'clock in the afternoon. But I am so extraordinarily careful in putting tickets, keys and other things in safety in places where I know I can find them in the dark that I am constantly mislaying them, as I know to my cost.

I used to be a constant source of trouble to my wife when travelling with her, who was what may fairly be termed untidy—except in her dress—and yet could always find what she required. I could not give the promise which Nadya wanted, for I wished to talk to some of the inhabitants during the journey. Nor would I take the risk of keeping my own tickets, feeling confident that I would really lose them for good. After several more frights Nadya gave up her attempts as hopeless and resigned herself to my rashness. She had a good sleep, and wanted it, for she had had a strenuous time since we had first met at the Customs House.

One of our fellow-passengers was a student about twenty-three years of age; he was very pleasant and communicative. I forget for what particular profession he was studying. The

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fourth passenger was a girl, and a very nice one in every way. She was seventeen years old and was returning to her widowed mother at Odessa. Her father had been a ship's officer and was lost at sea during the preceding winter.

Poor Valentine ! For this was her Christian name. She had been to Leningrad intending to spend a couple of months with some relations there. One day, however, soon after her arrival, on getting out of a motor-bus she had, unfortunately, slipped and had been run over by another vehicle. She was taken to hospital where her right leg had been amputated just below the knee. I asked her about the arrangements at the hospital, for I had heard that there was still a great lack of anæsthetics and other things as money was so urgently required for more important articles. As shall be seen presently there is some truth in this statement. Valentine told me that she had spent three weeks in the hospital when she was discharged cured, except that she would still have to wait some time before an artificial limb could be forwarded to her at Odessa. She said that all the arrangements and comfort were perfect, and she was very cheerful about her sad loss. She had kept it from her mother, intending to break the news to her on arrival at Odessa. I have had a

FOOD AT RAILWAY STATIONS

charming letter from her just as these lines are being written. She was not charged anything by the hospital.

The day was really quite hot, not unusually so for Russia at that season of the year, June, but the closed window and door made the ventilation decidedly stuffy. The country looked well considering the drought which had affected the U.S.S.R., just as it had this country ; but during my visit I did not hear of any serious shortage of water. One could distinguish the Collective Farms from the small holdings, which are still very numerous, because the former were being worked by gangs of a dozen men or women, whereas the small-holder has to rely upon himself and family.

The stations were all crowded. For instance, at Dno, a town of some importance about five hours' journey from Leningrad, the large platform was crowded with persons of all ages, chiefly peasantry, selling milk, fruit, and other articles. The station refreshment room was very well patronized, and the viands offered for sale were quite up to the old Russian mark ; that is to say, they were very good. There was no restaurant car on my train, and I would have eaten something at Dno in default of afternoon tea, if I had had any Russian currency. There was scarcely time to go some distance to my

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carriage and get some from Nadya, who was also probably wrapped in slumber.

The prices, being in Russian currency, were apparently enormous, and I should mention this was not peculiar to Dno, which in English means bottom or ground. The country was flat and low. The prices at a number of stations were practically the same. In some respects the old system of bargaining prevailed. For example, people bargained for fruit or cakes. But the price of milk, of which there was everywhere a quantity for sale in bottles, returnable or to be paid for, was the same. To give an idea of the impossibility of comparing Russian with foreign money I may say that the price of a half-pint of milk, and very good milk, taking the rouble at the par of exchange, was one shilling and threepence; that is to say, £1 per gallon. Quite poor-looking people bought it. It is not, therefore, surprising that a man with a fairly large family and earning say 1,300 roubles a month cannot afford to buy butter. I asked some "soft" travellers whether they did not consider the prices extremely high and they replied, "Nichevo," meaning "Oh, well, there's no use bothering".

I found the time pass very pleasantly, for I was so interested in the bystanders at stations. If asked whether things were fairly comfortable,

LAVATORY ACCOMMODATION

they would say yes, they were all right. The clothing was very poor, including that of the women in the country districts, but no worse than in imperial days. Everybody was very civil and not inquisitive. One or two persons would ask me what my calling was, and, as in the towns, seemed surprised when I told them. The great numbers of people whom I saw at railway stations seemed well nourished. Of course, food is easier to procure in the country than in the towns. This was especially the case where bread is concerned. The peasants bake their own bread, and very good it still is, so far as my limited experience in 1934 went. In the towns it was rationed, unless one happened not to belong to a guild or trade union, when bread must be purchased at a very high rate.

I had, of course, as already mentioned, made up my mind to face the expected lavatory accommodation not only at places like Mogilov, but what would be worse, namely in a crowded railway train. Frankly I dreaded it; felt I was getting very old and soft. But there was no help for it. The state of affairs at railway stations was sure to be the same. Imagine my delighted surprise when I made my first venture. The place was quite clean, although numbers of passengers had already used it. Moreover, there was a notice in large letters posted up ex-

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horting travellers, in the interests of health and cleanliness, to make use of the accommodation in the manner to which we in England are accustomed. This was most satisfactory and, although my nose had become very painful, the journey had no longer any terrors for me in this respect; nor was I once disappointed in the course of other journeys.

It is, perhaps, worth while to dilate somewhat on this unsavoury topic, because it is, it seems to me, desirable to show what the Communists have already effected in a very important matter. In former days, unless one were travelling in an international train with one's own lavatory accommodation, the closets in first-class carriages were usually in the same horrible state as in the cheapest coaches. Some years before the outbreak of the World War I was travelling via Kiev to the Black Sea and Transcaucasia. The lavatories at Kiev and other towns were in the usual condition. On eventually arriving at Tiflis I went to the principal hotel, a comparatively new one, owned by a German.

I expected the usual thing, and knew at any rate that it could not be any more unpleasant than elsewhere. I was, therefore, very agreeably astonished to find everything perfectly clean. The explanation was that the hotel proprietor

EDUCATION AND CLEANLINESS

had stretched a wire above the seat in such a position that the occupant of the closet was compelled, if he wished to relieve nature, to sit down. I happened to mention the very agreeable innovation to a friend of mine, the British Consul. He then explained that when the hotel was ready for opening he had impressed on the proprietor that he must wire the closets. The hotel's custom had not fallen off in consequence. It was always very well patronized. Of course, it catered only for travellers, who wished to have the best available accommodation. But here, in a slow train, with "hard" passengers using indifferently any empty closet, cleanliness was the rule. One would not have expected—I certainly had not—to find that the rulers of Russia since the Revolution would have paid any attention to the matter. They themselves had been brought up to accept things as they found them, which is just what they did not do. In fact, the Soviet Government lays the greatest stress on two things, namely education and cleanliness, with most gratifying and beneficial results.

We hear a good deal about the dirty habits of foreigners. But if we look about us at home we find some astonishingly nasty things, while priding ourselves on our very superior methods. In any town, large or small, in England one can

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find—as I have done—batches of highly respectable families who are compelled to live in horrid surroundings ; perhaps one lavatory, and that one inadequately supplied with water, for five families.

I know of two old ladies, of very good family, who keep a small school and live in a tiny house. They wash their hands and faces in the receptacle usually used for other purposes, and having washed it out they drink their tea out of it ! The few mothers who consider the elementary school not sufficiently genteel for their offspring, are quite well aware of this curious custom. But I must add that I never heard of closets being utilized in England as they used to be in Russia.

It is a curious fact that, whereas in imperial Russia the lavatory accommodation was so frightfully and universally abused, Russians of all classes were most particular about having only running water for washing purposes. The same rule prevails to-day. One turns a tap above the basin and the water from the little reservoir runs away at once through the waste hole, as there is no waste plug. The idea is, of course, to use only perfectly fresh water. I confess I prefer for convenience our possibly less hygienic system.

Another and most important fact struck me

HEAVY FREIGHT TRAFFIC

during this long railway journey, and indeed on every one, sometimes on different systems. This was the vast amount of goods traffic. I had travelled much more than usual on English railways before going to Russia in the year 1934. On the great lines to the North it was truly disheartening to find so little freight traffic in the great manufacturing districts as compared with pre-war days. Here in the U.S.S.R. the goods traffic of all kinds was tremendously heavy. It is true that the great majority of trucks were in want of a coat of paint ; but, as I have already explained, the potentially almost infinite resources of the country have hitherto been scarcely scratched. Restricted means, shortage of skilled workers, and insufficient ordinary labour compel concentration on what are considered for the time being the most important objects. But it is, as I myself know from experience, wonderful how long unpainted wood will last. The freight trains were, as used to be the case, of immense length ; but the gradients in European Russia are usually easy.

The afternoon and evening wore on, and after arranging ourselves for the night, and refreshing our appetites with food, we settled down to sleep. The atmosphere was by this time as stuffy as it could well become. The

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ventilator was not very efficient, but the door was frequently opened by intending passengers at stations and this freshened the place up. On the other hand the train was well lighted by electric lamps, which, in the "soft" compartments, could be turned down or shaded. In old days, before electric lighting, the one candle in a dim lantern made reading impossible unless one had one's own means of illumination, as was my custom.

An incident occurred during the early hours of the morning, Sunday, which showed how hard it is for a nation to unlearn custom. The train had been, contrary to my expectation, very punctual. Somewhere between three and four o'clock a.m. the night conductor of my coach, a lady of about fifty years of age, opened the door of my compartment. This awoke me—my unfortunate nose had prevented me from sleeping soundly—and I inquired whether anything was wrong. She replied that she was afraid that one of the wheels of the coach would not last out the journey. On inquiring whether the coach was likely to catch fire, and if we would have to turn out, she answered:

"Bog (God) . . ."

The old Eve had not been entirely exorcized. She had been on the point of using the former universal phrase, which in English

A GOOD BOLSHEVIK REMEMBERS

means: "God only knows." But being a good Bolshevik she recollected herself in time after the one slip, and said she hoped not. There was in any case no time to uncouple the carriage, which was in the centre of the long train, as we were due to start and "time must be kept". There were no other alarms and the train pulled up at Mogilov station punctually a few minutes after eight o'clock on the morning of Sunday, June 10. Nadya was smart and got hold of one of the few porters the moment we had stopped.

CHAPTER IX

THE BEST HOTEL

No Common Denominator—A Returned Emigrant—The Only Cab—Rumanian Military Mission—No Metalled Roads—Mogilov's Best Hotel—Tablecloth as Towel—Workers' Flats—New Water Supply—Bread Queues—The Tsar's Residence—A Priest and Soldiers—The Result of a Nap—Hours of Labour—A Public Park—Dress of Women—A Farmers' Dinner—My Discontented Cab-Driver—Russians Disappointed—A £19 Cab Fare—A Cheerful Prisoner—Trains Crammed

BEFORE proceeding further it is well to impress that we cannot compare the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics with our own country, which we regard, and in my opinion, rightly, as the most advanced in the world. We have, it is true, dreadful evils, but they are in process of gradual elimination. Great people, and very humane people, had lived before our time. They did what they could to further progress, but the millennium must still be a very long way off. I am impelled to make this observation, because an influential man wrote to me concerning my tour in the U.S.S.R. that "any improvement there can only be relative as compared with our standards".

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC STANDARDS

He wisely did not say "achievements" in place of "standards". Really one might just as well try to compare the social and economic standards of a very poor family with that of a wealthy and cultured English one. There is no common denominator. The question is: what improvement, if any, has been effected in the U.S.S.R. during the very few years, about fifteen, during which the Soviet Government has been in a position, since the Civil War and Allied intervention, to set to work on its plans? Or has Russia retrograded instead of going forward? People must form their own conclusions. I am sure she has not.

To resume my story, while Nadya was engaged with the porter and luggage I dashed out to look for some means of conveyance, for there were a number of passengers who had got out at Mogilov. I knew, of course, that there would be no tourist agency's car to meet me, as would be the case in cities frequented by tourists. Also I well remembered that the railway station at Mogilov was some miles distant from the town, which is a very large one. In former days, before the introduction of railways, it had been a very important trading centre on the Dnieper. It still retains much of its importance, and there is a regular service of passenger and cargo steamers to Kiev and

THE BEST HOTEL

elsewhere which is much patronized. The former are a trifle old-fashioned, but one can make a not unpleasant trip from Mogilov to Kiev. This journey is, of course, much longer in time, even supposing that the vessel is not landed on a sand-bank.

Among my fellow-passengers from London in the *Smolny* there had been one who was well over seventy years of age. He had emigrated when quite young to Australia, and this was his first visit to his native land. He was travelling alone, and was an adherent of the Revolution. It so happened that he also was bound for Mogilov, his native town. I missed him there, so had no opportunity of asking him for his impressions. Jews used to predominate there.

Nadya and I arrived at the town on a lovely morning in June. There was no automobile at the station and only one rather battered little one-horse cab, the driver being termed *izvoshchik*, or *izvo* for short. I quickly seized him, beating one or two other passengers who walked whereas I ran. Presently we were loaded up, and the driver inquired about our destination. I was now in charge, Nadya resigning herself into my care. I told the man to drive to the Bristol Hotel, which had been used for the foreign military missions at the Tsar's General

PROGRESSIVE METHODS

Headquarters, but he replied that it was no longer in existence, as it had been turned into a technical school. This was in one way very interesting, for it showed that the Soviet Government does not confine its progressive methods to tourists' cities only. I had not expected that they would do so, but at the same time, as Mogilov is not a manufacturing or industrial centre of great importance, I was struck by this corroboration of the assertion that the system is the same everywhere. At any rate the former hotel could not have been suddenly transformed for my special benefit.

Foiled in my first attempt I felt in my bones what was coming next. I told the driver to take us to the best hotel in the place, but he replied that there was no hotel, only some inns, some larger than others. We decided to try the largest, as giving us the best chance of comfort. My nose had become extremely painful during the night.

I must digress for a moment with an anecdote. When Rumania, in 1916, decided, as she had asserted she would do, to finish the War for civilization and freedom within three months, she, of course, dispatched a military mission to the Tsar's General Headquarters. As Rumania was a minor Power her mission was in inverse proportion to her size. It was by far the

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most numerous as regards personnel. I was present when it was presented to the Tsar before luncheon one day. One of the members was a very youthful officer, and the Emperor asked him whether he would not have preferred to be with his regiment in the field instead of in a peaceful place. He said he would not!

With the exception of occasional, very occasional, short strips of metalled roads in parts of some of the big cities there never had been macadam in Russia with one outstanding exception. This was the great Georgian military highway from Vladikavkaz in North Caucasia to Tiflis in Transcaucasia over the magnificent mountains. I had driven over it. The reason for its construction had been a purely military one, namely, the subjugation of the Caucasian tribes. It was magnificently metalled, because there was an infinite amount of the finest material available on the spot.

Cobbles were the rule even in St. Petersburg, and very big cobbles they were usually. I had not, of course, expected to find Mogilov paved according to our ideas, and I was not mistaken. Its cobbles had, as I well remembered, been unusually aggravating, and the station is some miles from the town. We were a very full load for our tiny cab, and the jolting caused some

HOTEL ACCOMMODATION

labour in preventing our belongings from being shot out on to the road.

In time, however, we halted in front of a house, one of a row of old red-brick buildings built long before the World War. The proprietress came to the door, and in reply to our request for two rooms she replied that there was only one vacant. We, therefore, deposited ourselves and our belongings in it, and told the driver he could either wait and feed his horse, or else go away and return in an hour's time. He preferred to wait, saying that he would not be likely to get another job at that hour of the day, as people would be at work. It happened to be the fourth of the five days of the working week. The fact of its being also a Sunday did not, of course, signify.

Nadya wished to do her toilet, and it was the same with myself. There was no washstand in the room. This was not unusual in provincial Russia. The house had twenty bedrooms, the furniture of each consisting of two single bedsteads with a mattress on both, very weather-beaten, two wooden chairs, a small table, and that was all. Nadya was rather surprised; but I told her she would learn something about the real old Russia—and the new. Travellers were always supposed to bring their own bed linen, partly to avoid risk of contamination, and

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partly because innkeepers suffered from want of sufficient capital. It was the same thing with towels. I had one, but Nadya had none. Not wishing, if it could be avoided, to wet mine, we asked if, as a great favour, we might have a towel each on payment. Unfortunately there was not one to spare, but the obliging hostess inquired whether we could make shift with a tablecloth. We gladly acquiesced and a very nice linen one was produced, embroidered in places. It served its purpose well.

The washing accommodation on each floor consisted of a metal basin with the usual little reservoir of water, tap, and no waste plug. This stood in the passage, so everybody took his turn. One of us made a rather unusual request for some hot water. I wished to shave and Nadya preferred hot to cold water. This put rather a strain on the establishment ; but in about three-quarters of an hour about a pint was boiled and produced. The universal samovar, or tea urn, was, of course, at our disposal.

I had been intrigued on reaching the landing where our room was situated to notice that there was no trace of the formerly universal horrid smell from the closet. I said to myself that the arm of the Soviet Government is a long one. I had warned Nadya beforehand what to expect, and the surprise was an ex-

A PLEASANT SURPRISE

ceedingly gratifying one. The place itself was of the old, universal type, and need not be further described. It was as clean and fresh as was possible in the circumstances and could not have been made so for my benefit as nobody knew where we should descend. When we reflect on our own extensive slums it will be recognized that in a country like Russia old buildings cannot be demolished until there is something better to take their place.

When Nadya and I had completed our toilets and had had some tea—our own tea, of course—she suggested something more substantial to eat. She was, as I have said, old enough to remember pre-war Russia, but had always lived in comfortable surroundings. I knew, of course, that we should have to go outside for food, as proved to be the case. So we awoke our slumbering *izvo*. In answer to his inquiry where we wished to go, I said that there used to be a restaurant on a bluff overlooking the Dnieper with a beautiful view, and there he deposited us.

It looked much the same as when I had last seen it eighteen years previously, except that a touch of paint would have done no harm. The proprietor, a native of Mogilov, welcomed us and provided a really good but simple meal with some atrociously bad beer. He had also

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native wine, but that, I knew from experience, while unadulterated, was stronger than we would have relished, and the day was getting hot. When it came to settling up, the total in currency roubles was very much less than we had expected. Some other guests were also having meals. Everything was quite simple, but perfectly clean.

After we had finished and walked down to the bridge over the Dnieper, which was just below us, we decided to go for a drive. I also wished to revisit some of my old haunts of the year 1916. Originally it had been my intention to pass a couple of days or so at Mogilov. But except for the visibly great increase of population since my previous sojourn in the town there was evidently no change in the place itself except in two particulars. One was some new buildings of rather striking appearance as regards architecture, while the other was the laying of a water supply which had never been done before. I reckoned that it might be rather inconvenient for Nadya to share my bedroom or me hers, so I told her we would spend a happy day at Mogilov and take the night train to the south. She was quite agreeable. She was interested in the place from what I had told her about it; but she had no desire to linger there longer than was necessary.

A NEW WATER SUPPLY

I inquired from a passer-by what a new building, which had attracted my attention, was intended for. It was evidently occupied. He said that it was a workers' tenement house, flats. The explanation of the curious architecture was that the different apartments should have, unlike so many expensive West End flats in London, full daylight and air on two sides instead of on one only. I decided to inspect one if there should be time after visiting some other places. My comments shall be reserved until later.

As regards the new water supply, the pipes were being laid in the old Russian fashion; that is to say, they were laid at a depth of several feet, so that by no possibility could the water freeze and break the pipes in the rigorous winter. I never heard of frozen water pipes in the old Russia. I watched the men at work in different streets and they were putting their backs into it. I also observed something else, not so satisfactory. This was the bread queues.¹ People had been patiently standing, for hours sometimes, waiting their turn to obtain the ration. This could easily, I believe, be obviated by providing more places of issue. In Mogilov, and in other places, in fact no doubt everywhere, only two or three persons can enter the place at one time. I am not a statistician. If I

¹ See Preface.

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were I dare say I should calculate the number of working hours which are lost by the present system. Possibly it is a choice of evils. The towns are so extremely densely populated that, as indeed a Russian told me, the housing accommodation cannot well be drawn upon for more office accommodation. Anyway, the Russians are very patient.

We went to look at the building which had been the Bristol Hotel. It was, as my driver had informed me, a technical school. I shall refer to this subject when writing about education in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Mogilov had been before the World War the chief town of a governorship. During the War the governor's residence had been occupied by the Emperor Nicholas, his little son, and also by the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna and her daughters during their fairly frequent visits to General Headquarters. An aide-de-camp or two, the master of the Household, the body physician, and the domestic staff filled the not very large building, which is beautifully situated with a glorious view over the Dnieper from the dining-room side of the house, which had also a large and pleasant garden. The chiefs of foreign military missions lunched and dined with the Tsar, and the meals were of the very simplest description. Champagne,

WHITE RUSSIA BILINGUAL

which used to flow like water in the palaces, was served only once during my stay in 1916, and that was to drink the health of a Japanese prince who had come to offer his congratulations.

Mogilov is situated in White Russia, which has a large Jewish element ; in fact, before and during the War Mogilov was inhabited almost entirely by Jewish traders, most of them very small men financially, who usually spoke Yiddish. To-day public notices are in Russian and Hebrew. The governor's palace is now the central office of the large region. I was anxious to see the place where I had been treated in so friendly a manner and asked Nadya whether she would like to accompany me. She said she would, but that it might not be wise. If one asked somebody in the place, an official, for permission to enter it would probably be refused.

There was something in her argument—in fact, a good deal. While driving about the town we had passed the cathedral, where I had attended service on special occasions, and meant to go in just to look round. On the entrance gate, however, was a notice forbidding unauthorized persons to enter. The buildings had been turned into a registry for keeping the archives. As I did not wish to waste time over provincial documents we had gone on our way.

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But I was anxious for sentimental reasons to see the governor's residence.

On the way thither we passed a barracks and outside the big entrance gate a number of Red soldiers, young and of excellent physique, were loitering. About thirty yards in front of us—we were proceeding at a foot's pace—there was a priest of the Orthodox Church, who went by the soldiers half a dozen yards away from them. He was dressed, of course, in his professional garments, otherwise I could not have recognized him for what he was, a priest pursuing his vocation. Not one of the laughing soldiery took the slightest notice of him. They were indeed more attracted by myself, no doubt because my clothes were of a quality if not of a kind to which they were unaccustomed.

We drew up some little distance from the entrance to the front door and got out of the cab. There were a lot of notices posted up, including one telling unauthorized persons not to enter. I asked Nadya if she were game to follow me and she said yes. We just strolled inside the building. The entrance hall, a very small one, was just the same as I had known it. The rooms on the ground floor, which had been utilized by the Tsar's personal staff, had been in one or two instances divided so as to give more space for office accommodation.

NOBODY NOTICES ME

Proceeding upstairs to where the imperial family had lived and where the reception saloon and dining-room were situated, nobody among the messengers and orderlies took the slightest notice of us. I opened the doors of some of the rooms. They were all well occupied by officials. Some of them looked up, and as I merely looked round and then silently withdrew, nothing further happened. What sad memories my intrusion aroused in me. The General Staff offices, close to the governor's residence, were as formerly, and still very fully occupied by clerks and other officials who were coming and going. Part of the garden, where I used to walk with the Tsar after luncheon sometimes, or with the Empress, has been taken away from the grounds and given over to the public as a place of relaxation and amusement. This again is part of the new system. There had been nothing of the sort in former days.

By this time, and after a little more rambling, my nose had become very painful, and besides I was rather tired. We returned, therefore, to our lodgings, as I intended to do a bold thing and take a rest. The indefatigable Nadya, however, was so intrigued about Mogilov that she resolved to go for a stroll by herself, promising to return for me a little later in the afternoon.

I was brave, for I knew what might be ex-

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pected from either of the two mattresses in our room. But I did need a rest. Just half an hour or so would be quite sufficient. I had not travelled like this for so many years, and I was in my seventy-ninth year, although mercifully I do not feel my age. In fact, only the other day, feeling very vigorous, I made a bet with an eighteen-year old girl to run her a hundred yards. I held her for about fifty yards and then saw I had taken on too big a job. But she was not very fast on her feet. Well, I nourished a hope—to give me courage—that the vermin, which were absolutely certain to be in the mattress, would be so amazed at finding something so fresh as myself that they would not consider me sufficiently tasty for their palates, accustomed, no doubt, to rich food. In a moment I was fast asleep. After what appeared to me to be another minute I awoke to see Nadya sitting on her bed eyeing me. I had slept soundly for nearly three-quarters of an hour, and felt quite refreshed and ready for anything. She confessed that she also would have dearly liked to have stretched herself for a slumber. But my warning had deterred her—and wisely so. Not many minutes had elapsed after I got up when I realized that I had cherished a false hope. No more need be said about this mischance.

A PUBLIC PARK

Nadya then told the driver to take us to a public park which we had passed earlier in the day. At that time there had been scarcely anybody in it except an occasional mother and young child. But by the time we set out again the day's work was finished. It has already been mentioned that the standard hours of work are seven per day, which with one hour for the midday meal means that workers start at eight o'clock and knock off at four o'clock. In certain industries night shifts are worked, and some others, like my waitress, work more than the regulation seven hours, and get more days out in consequence.

The park was very attractively laid out and it was full of people, old and young. A good many children were barefoot, and the difficulty about footwear is still acute, nor is the home-made product apparently of superior quality or taking appearance. But the women were decidedly on the whole not only neatly but nicely dressed. These places of public resort are, of course, very beneficial for the inhabitants. Some places are better provided than others, according to their relative importance. But Mogilov may, I imagine, fairly be taken as representative of other towns not visited by tourists, and it certainly has its amenities, and improvements, for which under the

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imperial régime it might have had to wait indefinitely.

Time passed very agreeably, the day became cooler, and it was time to think about our evening meal. We felt that we could not do better than return to the restaurant where we had lunched. Nor were we mistaken. The proprietor welcomed us effusively. After our departure, he told us, he had had a stroke of luck. Two hundred collective farmers had come to have a dinner. They had done unusually well and decided to celebrate the occasion. In fact, the last of them had departed only a very short time before our arrival. This was, we thought, just as well. They had been, we were told, extremely cheerful.

Although my original intention had been, before leaving Leningrad for the south, to spend at least one night in Mogilov, being under the impression, I don't know why, that the Bristol Hotel, if less agreeable than formerly—it was a poor thing—would still be open owing to the influx of new-comers, I had prudently arranged for a possible change of plan. All of which means that places had been reserved for Nadya and myself in a train leaving Mogilov for Kiev shortly before midnight on the day of my arrival in case circumstances should make me change my mind. If I should pass

A TALK WITH A RESIDENT

the night at Mogilov then a telegram to Lenin-grad would reserve seats for a later date. It would have been a rather costly proceeding; but then I wanted all the comfort obtainable. As matters turned out, the original bookings held good. I had been able to exhaust Mogilov in one long day, and I had had enough of vermin to last me for the remainder of my life, at least in one dose at a time. Even if I myself had been reckless it was impossible to subject Nadya to the horrors of a night in the inn.

I made up my mind, therefore, to go on the same night. After dawdling about where we had dined, it was time to collect our belongings and settle up with the landlady. She had somehow taken it for granted that we should pass the night in her establishment and our passports, which had been, of course, surrendered on our arrival, were still in the hands of the authorities, it appeared. But the invincible Nadya eventually succeeded in retrieving them. All this, and the settlement of the bill, took a good deal of time. This was no hardship for me, as I sat in the *izvo* and talked to the driver who owned his own horse and vehicle. He was a man of middle age and, therefore, had been liable for service during the World War. He had not, however, been taken as he was the sole support of his widowed mother.

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The man was not a member of any guild or trust. He told me that he was, on the whole, better off in consequence. He was a small-holder and lived about a mile and a half from the railway station. This, with occasional cab fares, enabled him to rub along with his wife and family. But, of course, his mode of living was in some respects more costly than if he had been a trade unionist. Food was more expensive, a good deal more so, as he had no ration cards. I had already heard this from other Russians, who had been questioned by me at railway stations during the journey from Leningrad. My driver told me that a good many of his fellow-countrymen followed his example as regards membership of a trust. If it had not been for the delay at the inn I would have visited his cottage; but there was not time for this, as it was advisable to get to the station in very good time indeed. He told me, however, that he and his family were quite comfortable and had sufficient accommodation.

By this time we were on very friendly terms. I had told him who I was. I therefore was bold enough to ask him outright whether he appreciated the change of system from pre-war days to the Soviet régime. If, he said, he were given the choice, he would prefer the imperial system. Life was then, for the great

MANY DISLIKE THE SOVIET SYSTEM

mass of people, dreadfully hard, but as long as one did not meddle with politics the authorities left one to do as one pleased. Taxes on an entirely insufficient income, and living on the border line of starvation, he told me, had then rendered life very difficult. But, as he was old enough to remember the old conditions in which he had been brought up, he felt he was too old to change. This was quite intelligible, and Soviet authorities had, before and since, confirmed the existence of this attitude, which is a very natural one, if we consider it impartially.

Taking Russian psychology into account I know that many, perhaps most of the older people dislike the present system which compels able-bodied persons to work if they are to live. In former days one could, except in times of famine, rub along, because Russians were, and are still, very kind-hearted, not excepting the Communists. But to-day they seldom have the means wherewith to help outsiders. It is not, I believe, want of sympathy which prevents them.

My driver was probably representative of a large, perhaps a very large section of the community. From what he told me, and others in different places also, I think the older people, who were enthusiastic for the change in 1917, are disappointed that results are not yet what

THE BEST HOTEL

had been expected. We need not, however, go to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to learn the truth of this view. The driver did not, I am sure, really want to go back to the old days, for the produce of the soil was, owing to the agricultural system then in force, so very meagre for the small-holders. The reason for this shall be given elsewhere in Chapter XII, for it was a most important factor in the life of Russia.

I could quite understand his attitude, and remarked that to-day, at any rate, the masses everywhere know, in town and country, that there is no small, but very wealthy and influential class living in luxury, and leaving fortunes to their children on which in their turn to subsist in idleness. He entirely agreed with me. It was the actual everyday hardships which touched him most, as one would expect. Of course there were no regulation hours of labour for him and seldom a "day out". But he could please himself about this. Could he afford to take one when the fancy came to him?

I pointed out the tremendous obstacles which the Soviet Government has to contend against, and the very few years, a negligible period of time, almost, which it has had to develop the new system. I said that, after all, real efforts were being made in places like Mogilov for

A CAB FARE

the betterment of the masses, and that in time everybody must benefit. He remained sceptical, and so did many others to whom I spoke in the U.S.S.R. The hardships of the old days had, perhaps, faded somewhat from his memory. But when I reverted to them, he in some respects kept a fairly open mind concerning the rival method. In reply to some remark of mine about the solicitude of the Soviet Government for the material welfare of the masses, as evidenced by, for example, the new dwellings for workers, he observed that there were still so few of them. Soviet authorities are, of course, as some of them have told me, well aware of the psychological traits of the Russians, and they are, naturally and inevitably, concentrating on educating the young.

At long last Nadya reappeared, having settled up with the landlady, who was all smiles, and having recovered our indispensable passports. We then set out for the station. We arrived there in very good time as far as the train was concerned, for we should have about three-quarters of an hour to wait. First of all, however, our driver had to be settled with. I had not made any bargain with him when we started in the morning, so Nadya had to make the best arrangement that was possible. She began by offering him without comment, ex-

THE BEST HOTEL

cept a word of thanks, the sum of one hundred currency roubles. The man at once asked for one hundred and fifty. He did not, of course, expect to get anything like that amount; but this was the old Russia. Eventually Nadya compromised for one hundred and ten roubles. The driver was extremely gratified and owed to me that he never expected to reap such a harvest again! I knew that; but he does not get much luck in life, and besides we had had a most interesting conversation. We had also discussed at odd moments during the day when driving about Mogilov, and stopping to look at people and things, some aspects of the new régime, and Nadya herself had been much interested. By this time she and I knew each other so well that I would not have hesitated to cross-examine the cab-driver in the manner I had done if she had been present. She liked to learn. She, like other Bolsheviks, realizes that for the ordinary human being it is difficult to live to any considerable extent on Faith and Hope.

As regards the cab fare, if Nadya had not provided herself with a stock of currency roubles in Leningrad, I must have changed some of my travellers' cheques at Mogilov. As the rate of exchange is arbitrarily fixed by the Soviet Government, and as the pound

A SEETHING MASS

sterling is no longer on a gold basis, I would have been obliged, in order to procure one hundred and ten roubles, to have given up cheques to the amount of more than £19. The Rs. 110 were really worth about ten shillings, quite a lot in the circumstances.

The station was crammed with a seething mass of human beings of all ages. There was a waiting-room, but this had long been filled to overflowing. The approaches were pretty well in the same state, and passengers were not allowed on the platform until the train should be drawing into the station. Nadya and I found a small spot just outside the station-master's office. Depositing our luggage on the stone floor we sat down on some of it. Now and again people tripped over it or us; but they were always very courteous if I happened incautiously to stretch out a leg. Presently Nadya left me for a while, and I hoped she would be able to battle her way back in time for the train which would shortly be due, and was punctual. Fortunately she managed this.

While I was waiting for her, two young Red soldiers appeared, fully armed of course, with another youth of about their age. He was a prisoner and had, from their conversation, evidently only been arrested that evening. What his crime was I did not overhear. But one of

THE BEST HOTEL

the escort thought he was "for it", as they say in military parlance, whereas the other took a more lenient view. At any rate the prisoner was quite as cheerful as the escort, and so I presumed that nothing very serious had occurred. Presently they disappeared into the office where, through the opened door, I could see an officer was seated. Talking about officers reminds me of uniforms. The station-master, and Mogilov is a big station, was dressed in a very shabby old suit of khaki colour, and his office was designated by a red armlet bearing the name of his appointment.

As the train ran into the station the doors to the platform were opened and there was a rush for the carriages. We had no need to hurry, feeling confident that our seats would be available for us. But we had no choice at first, because we were literally swept off our feet. Fortunately we had secured at the last moment a most obliging porter, or else we would have lost some of our belongings in the rush. We found two passengers occupying our seats, but they went out without a murmur on being told that the places were already engaged.

The train, like every other train in which I travelled in the U.S.S.R., was crammed. But in England it has occurred to me to have paid for a reserved compartment and then have had

APPEARANCES DECEPTIVE

to share it. The excess money paid was, of course, eventually refunded to me. The two other seats in our compartment were occupied by two very old women. From their appearance one would have thought that the most they could afford would be "hard" seats, if so much. They were travelling independently of each other, but got out during the night. I did not sleep well, because my nose was becoming more and more painful, and I was much looking forward to seeing a doctor on arriving at my destination, Kiev. One of the old women dropped some small coins on the floor of the compartment, but did not notice her loss. When I handed them back to her, in place of the gratitude which I had expected she thanked me most courteously, but said it really didn't matter. One should not judge by appearances!

We settled ourselves down for the night for the sixteen hours' run to Kiev, which we were due to reach on the following afternoon.

CHAPTER X

LOUD SPEAKERS BELLOW

Condition of Crops—Women on the Land—Loud Speakers Bellow—Propaganda—A Humbug—Cheap Travel—Crowded Streets—Pretty Faces—Youth and the Press—Wheat in the Ukraine—Farming—Doctor's Small Fee—Medical Men Differ—The Theatre—Russian Plumbing—Overcrowding—Kiev a Holy City—Museums—Enormous Cinema Factory—The "Day Out"—Old Kiev—Back Alleys—Discontent—Suffering—Future of Soviet System—Potential Resources—Russian Psychology—The Soviet Principle—Dreadful Suffering—"No conscience eft"—Hunger—The Ration System—Work for All—U.S.S.R. Under-populated—Russia Old and New

ON the journey to Kiev there were, of course, many more hours of daylight than of darkness, and so I was able to see a great deal of the crops. They looked better than I had expected considering the drought, for there had been reports in the English Press that the Ukraine was suffering from famine. That detestable weed, charlock, which we also know so well, was very abundant. There is not, as I have already stated, a sufficient quantity of labour in the U.S.S.R. Parenthetically it may be mentioned that the Hebrew language was not in evidence at

K I E V T O - D A Y

stations and buildings in the Ukraine. Russian and Ukrainian are used.

It became very sultry as the day wore on, as was to be expected. Gangs of women were as usual working in the prairies under the supervision of bailiffs. About ten or a dozen women would form a gang. Of course, they always did work the soil along with the men. The journey was not, however, wearisome, for there were many stops. Everywhere the people seemed well nourished. Eventually we arrived at Kiev punctually about four o'clock in the afternoon without any mishap.

On quitting our compartment we were met by a charming girl, Ira. I never learned her surname. If I had been travelling alone she would have been my companion at this halting-place. But as she had nothing else to do in the way of public duties and preferred coming with Nadya and myself we were glad of her extremely pleasant company. I had not been to Kiev for several years before the World War, and found the station had evidently been enlarged. But a process of reconstruction was going on which would, when completed, make it of monstrous size. The traffic, goods and passenger, was said to be increasing by leaps and bounds. When we reached the entrance hall leading out to the street the bellowing of

LOUD SPEAKERS BELLOW

frightfully aggressive loud speakers was very much in evidence. This sort of propaganda is common all over the U.S.S.R. in the streets and elsewhere. With a backward people like the Russians it probably has some of the desired effect; but it would not appeal to our workers, who want something more entertaining. One bother about these loud speakers is that when there are more than one within range of each other it is exceedingly difficult, sometimes impossible, to understand what is being preached. There is, however, no doubt about the quantity of the noise.

Kiev had always been an important place, although Kharkov was until quite recently the capital of the Ukraine. Kiev, at present the fourth largest city in the U.S.S.R., has superseded the latter. It is said to be better situated. But Kiev used to be the headquarters of one of the great imperial military districts. When I first visited the place the celebrated Dragomirov was supreme. He was a bit of a humbug. I had arrived late one evening and had immediately informed his Excellency of the fact. About three o'clock in the morning I was awakened by a messenger to say that Dragomirov would receive me in two hours' time—that is to say, at five o'clock. As his mansion was a long way from where I was

CROWDED STREETS

staying, and I had to get my uniform unpacked, it was, therefore, about time for me to get out of bed. He was very pleasant, but a terror to his subordinates. He had a great deal of energy. He inquired whether I was tired after my long journey, and I replied that in England, which he knew nothing about, we kept earlier hours than he did! In those days there was not a decent hotel in the city.

A suite had been reserved for me in 1934 in the Continental Hotel, which had not long been opened. It was on the same lines as the Astoria in Leningrad, and the prices were much the same as one would pay at Claridge's. It should, however, be mentioned that tourist parties whose purses are very small can travel and do their sightseeing at an extraordinarily low rate from start to finish. But, of course, the conditions and food are on a different scale.

On my way to the hotel the great numbers of persons strolling in the different streets attracted my attention. The explanation was, as I was aware, that the day's work was finished by that time and people, especially the female sex, were out to enjoy themselves. There were crowds of nicely dressed women and a lot of really pretty faces, more so than in old days it seemed to me. No doubt this was

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because they were more attractively garbed than under the imperial régime. It had been the same thing at Mogilov.

In Kiev also it was curious to see the number of young men who perused their newspapers as they strolled along the streets. 'It must not, however, be inferred that the majority of youths were doing this. Many of them were occupied as they would have been in England, namely, in talking to their best girls. Certainly the crowds everywhere struck me as being decidedly cheerful. Formerly Russians had been more quiet, unless they were performing some of the wonderful Russian dances. No traveller, however, can see everything; but I shall presently have something to say about the other side of the picture which tourists are not taken anywhere to see. It would distress them, and no country wants its profitable visitors to become unhappy by afflicting sights.

I had made no plans regarding the duration of my stay in Kiev. It had to depend on the circumstances of the moment. I might have wandered farther afield on the day after my arrival, or I might spend a good deal of time there. This, in fact, turned out to be the case. An excellent automobile was at my disposal at any hour, and all my chauffeurs were interesting men, one or two being official

UKRAINE CHIEF WHEAT PRODUCER

Communists. I found that there was much in Kiev itself to occupy my attention, and it would have been the same at Kharkov, Rostov on the Don, or anywhere else. The Ukraine being the principal wheat producer of the U.S.S.R. there were any number of Collective Farms and small holdings. The nearest State Farm was about thirty-six hours distant by train, and the only difference between the two varieties is that the latter are of far greater extent than the Collectives, and are termed Factories, because the workers are paid wages, whereas in the case of the Collective Farms, meaning a number of small holdings under one management, the peasantry share the produce and income, those who work hardest receiving on each kind of farm proportionately greater rewards—piecework, in fact.

Before I could do anything else after arriving at my hotel I sent for a doctor, for I was by now, owing to the dust of the journey, in great pain. I could have my choice of paying him his fee either in currency roubles or in foreign money. I selected the latter, and was very agreeably surprised when the doctor asked for only five shillings and sixpence. He wrote me a prescription for some ointment which was remarkably efficacious. Since my return to England medical men, to whom I have

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shown the prescription, have been greatly attracted by it and have taken copies.

A good many Englishmen are suspicious of foreign doctors and surgeons. I may be pardoned, I hope, for relating a little anecdote. An old friend of mine, the late Sir Evelyn Grant-Duff, was at the embassy in Rome. He was altogether run down, and sent for the best Italian medical adviser obtainable. There was at the time no English doctor in the city. The Italian was very much puzzled, Grant-Duff told me afterwards. The patient was run down and feverish, had no appetite—in fact, was altogether out of sorts, and for no apparent reason. At last the doctor asked whether Grant-Duff was in the habit of taking baths. The reply was in a somewhat indignant affirmative.

“Oh, no wonder you are ill. Leave them off for a time altogether, and then afterwards take them only in moderation.”

The patient soon recovered perfect health. I owe a debt of gratitude to my Russian doctor, who said it would not be necessary for him to visit me again, which at first rather disappointed me. But he was quite right in his diagnosis and prescription. I had an excellent dinner, and then Nadya and Ira went off to the former's room for gossip, and I took a

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stroll through some of the streets. It was still light, and they were crowded. Near my hotel was a large theatre. The prices being in currency roubles, foreign money not being accepted, I borrowed some and looked in. The house was crammed. But the play did not interest me; it was melodrama, which has never attracted me. There was a notice posted in the entrance hall to the effect that children under fourteen years of age were not to be admitted. They see much more lurid pieces in other countries, including our own. But the theatre-going public in the U.S.S.R. certainly gets very full value for its money, for I was awoke in the night between twelve and one o'clock by the audience streaming out of the theatre and discussing the play. My window was open; but I think I should have heard them if it had been closed. One thing had struck me about the male portion of the audience. Men dressed in the poorest quality of clothing often purchased the most expensive seats. On inquiry afterwards I was told that it is very usual for men to dress as poorly and, therefore, as cheaply as possible in order to have more money available for amusements. There is a good deal to be said for this habit, and everything in the U.S.S.R. is on a cash basis.

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In accordance with my usual habit of taking baths at night, just before going to bed I carried out the process. When I had finished washing and was drying myself I noticed that water was lapping round my feet. The waste plug had, of course, been withdrawn. It was rising, and coming up through a grating in the middle of the bathroom floor, some distance from the bath itself. I promptly replaced the waste plug and went to bed, not wishing to trouble the maid on night duty. On the following morning, when the day maid, who had received me on my arrival, brought me my morning tea, I said :

“*Golubushka* (dear little pigeon), something dreadful happened last night. When I . . .”

“I know,” she interrupted, “it was the waste water coming on to the bathroom floor. I forgot to tell you yesterday that it has always been like that ever since the hotel has been opened. I’ll tell you how to prevent this from happening again. All you have to do is to put the waste plug sideways in the hole, and then as the water cannot run out quickly there will be no more flooding.” She was quite right.

Just opposite my bedroom windows was what had been a large apartment house of the highest quality. The windows were opened

OVERCROWDING

wide about eight o'clock in the morning after my arrival. Evidently one family, consisting of father, mother, and four boys aged from about three to eleven, inhabited one room. The frequent overcrowding cannot be overcome for a long time to come; but, of course, some places are worse situated in this respect than others. The population of Kiev, already very dense, is increasing rapidly. The system of housing and rents will be considered later, as also what is so closely connected therewith, namely, salaries and wages. In the case of the family just mentioned the members dressed in batches, commencing with the two elder boys, who then came out and stood on the balcony. Presently the two tinies appeared and joined their brothers. When the parents were ready the boys returned to the room for morning tea.

My pain had been greatly relieved by the treatment, and I enjoyed rambling about the streets of the modern city. There is also an old town to be mentioned presently. Kiev was a Holy City, for it was there that St. Vladimir introduced Christianity in the tenth century. His monastery, which he founded, has been turned into one of the very numerous museums. All kinds of relics are preserved in it, and the place is visited by numbers of

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persons of all ages, including Communists. They are interested to learn something of the past, and I never saw anybody jeer at any object displayed. It seemed to me that they either glanced indifferently or else were thinking the matter over.

The modern part of Kiev is excellently paved now, well watered, and altogether a very attractive city with many fine buildings. There are also, as in other towns, plenty of arrangements for outdoor recreations and physical training. The Sports park was, when work was over for the day, exceedingly well patronized ; indeed, the crowd was rather uncomfortably dense when I happened, passing by, to look in for a short time. An enormous cinema factory was under construction. It is claimed that it will be the largest of its kind in the world. Russian films, like Russian aircraftsmen and pilots, are quite in the very front rank.

On the morning after my arrival at Kiev I was struck by the crowds in the larger streets. I had forgotten for the moment that it was the sixth day or " day out ". Certainly the people were cheerful enough and the weather was glorious. I would have visited some of the schools, for education is rather a hobby of mine, having seen a good many different methods in various countries. Unfortunately

OLD KIEV

the schools were all closed for the summer holidays, which had commenced a short time before my arrival. The subject of education shall be referred to later on in these pages. From one of the public parks one gets a splendid view of the city and Dnieper. There was quite a fair amount of traffic, passenger and freight, on the great river. Everybody was very civil, and indeed pleasant, if I asked questions. Somehow Kiev attracted me greatly, and it would not have bored me to have spent a month there. As it was the days passed very quickly, and I was often learning something new.

Even if I had not been told of it earlier I would have realized that there must be another side to the picture, namely, what I term the back alleys. But they were not in imperial days considered to be slums. The buildings were there and were occupied by quite respectable families. Absolutely indispensable patching up would be undertaken from time to time, and there was an end of the matter. This old city of Kiev is distinct from the modern one. There was no difficulty in looking in at some wretched hovel. At the entrance to the courtyard of some tenement building there would usually be a notice forbidding unauthorized persons to enter. But the house

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porter would not always be there, and it was a perfectly simple matter to walk into the yard as if one had business there. The next stage would be to knock at the door of some apartment and inquire whether so-and-so lived in it. The reply would, of course, be in the negative; but one could ask whether the person at the door knew where the fictitious acquaintance lived. Meanwhile one could get a good look round and see the squalor which had always existed. The difference between the old and the new Russia in this matter lay in the fact that one would see from time to time families existing in these wretched places who in imperial days would have been comfortably housed.

The explanation is that the present tenants, seen by me, could not afford anything better owing to the cost of living in the towns. The Soviet authorities, with whom I have discussed this subject, frankly admit the existence of the dreadful sufferings of many families. Death alone can release most of them; but they are, of course, gradually dying out. Middle-aged Russians told me that they frankly dislike the new system, because, they say, it destroys incentive. These acquaintances of mine had been brought up under the imperial régime and had happened to be doing well under it.

A CRITIC OF THE SOVIET

But I cannot help thinking that the overwhelming majority of the people—that is to say, of course, the younger generations—are better off than they would have been before the year 1914. The reason is that there is work, and more than enough work for all. There is no blind alley. On the contrary, a man or a woman who desires it can go ahead to higher-paid posts by attending advanced educational establishments free of expense.

Older people naturally become impatient— younger ones, indeed, also—when positive results in large quantities are not soon forthcoming. I was talking one day to a middle-aged man who has a good job under the Soviet Government. In reply to some remark of mine that progress, if necessarily slow, was being made, he mentioned the matter of slums and the better-class people who now live in them. I said I knew something about that, and he answered: "They don't let you see anything they don't want you to see." He was suspicious of everything connected with the Soviet system. No doubt, as already stated, the authorities would not have offered to show me unpleasant sights.

This man was naturally resentful, and this is perfectly intelligible and natural. He had been at first an enthusiastic supporter of the Revolu-

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tion or, rather, of the Bolshevik side of it. But the chaos which supervened, inevitable though it may have been in the circumstances, certainly must have caused a terrible amount of suffering among the very people the Bolsheviks most wished to help.

The father of the man of whom I am writing had been a prosperous manufacturer in a small way of business. The catastrophic change so worried him that he died in consequence. His widow survived, but became a permanent invalid, and was supported by my informant, who himself was a married man with children. His salary was good and his clothing neat. Its quality was certainly poor, and he disliked it chiefly because it was issued as articles are issued to soldiers out of a quartermaster's store. I quite saw his point of view, and he naturally lived in the present and did not trouble about what might happen to posterity. In reply to one of my observations concerning workers' dwellings—he had not an apartment in one of them—he also asked me :

“ Well, how many of them are there ? ”

The future of the Soviet régime obviously depends entirely on the attitude of the rising generation and its psychology, and the Soviet authorities do not attempt to question this. They are, therefore, making every effort by

INFINITE POTENTIAL RESOURCES

propaganda to get people to believe—and these people have never known any other standard of life so that they cannot compare the present with the past—that by united efforts everybody will in time be comfortably off as a starting-point. Certainly Russia has the infinite potential resources necessary for the realization of this ideal. It will rest with the people themselves whether it will ultimately materialize. Will the inherited instincts of centuries, especially the innate factor of sloth, prevail over the boundless energy and enthusiasm of the teachers, themselves in a tiny minority?

These instincts may, and probably will, greatly retard progress. But taking everything into consideration, and judging by what I saw and heard, I cannot believe that the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics will ever return to the capitalist system as known in western lands. The general compulsory education of the masses alone would, I venture to believe, prevent this. The truth is that Change is a law of nature. New methods are adopted in this country or in that. But nobody can foretell with certainty what form these changes will ultimately adopt. In our own highly developed country we have seen—and see daily—numberless examples of the truth of this assertion.

It should always be borne in mind that the

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Soviet Government has had only about fifteen years in which to begin to develop its principle. This principle, I repeat, is that every deserving person shall have a sufficiency before anybody else has more than he needs. As regards the methods of putting this principle into practice, the Russian nature is so very different from that of our own people that the latter would not for a moment tolerate what has had to be done by the Bolsheviki in their own country. These Bolsheviki, that is to say the teachers themselves, have made tremendous mistakes, because they have had to learn the harsh lessons of experience. But they have also, I venture to believe, shown that they can recognize their own errors and are doing their best to remedy them.

I shall now give a concrete instance of the dreadful suffering which is being endured by so many older Russians with families dependent on them. Death alone can release them from their woes, for they are not likely on the whole to survive until the standard of living shall be sufficiently improved for them to enjoy their remaining days. In the U.S.S.R. I was fortunate enough to meet an American citizen who had emigrated to the United States many years before 1934. From dire poverty in Russia he had become an evidently very prosperous

VISIT TO A SLUM

citizen of his adopted country, for his journey must have cost him many hundreds of pounds and business in the States is, as we are aware, on the whole now decidedly bad. This man had brought with him his wife and son, a boy of school age, and a very intelligent lad. They were all of the Jewish faith. I had told him of my probable visit to Kiev, where his parents, it appeared, still lived, and he had given me their address. My acquaintance, an enthusiastic revolutionary, although an undoubtedly very prosperous capitalist, also wished to see things for himself as a returned Ukrainian.

The parents were residing in the old city, where, indeed, they always had lived, so the son had informed me. One day, armed with a letter of introduction which he had given me, I set out for the house. It was some distance from my hotel. The approach from the very dirty courtyard to the large and dilapidated-looking tenement building where the old people were dwelling showed me at once that they must have come down in the world, apart from what the son had told me previously. It was a building like vast numbers of others built very many years ago, a wretched place outside at any rate. I knew the type from pre-war days.

On knocking at the door, which was on the

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ground floor, I was glad to find, as this relieved me from the necessity of climbing perhaps several flights of dark and dirty stairs, it was opened by my travelling acquaintance himself. This was indeed another kind act on the part of my good goddess, Chance. I could make a pretty exhaustive inspection and talk with greater freedom than to complete strangers encountered by chance or by knocking at their doors. My travelling friend with his family had arrived in Kiev just a very few hours before my visit to his parents. He was staying in the best hotel in Kiev. In any case it was evident that there was not room in his father's apartment for anybody else. I was greeted warmly. My friend had been somewhat doubtful, he told me during this visit, whether I would have the nerve to pass through the courtyard. He had thought, on seeing it for himself, that it might be too repellent for me. But I reassured him, for I said that I had seen that sort of thing often enough in the old Russia.

I arrived during the middle of a party which had been organized to welcome the son's return. He had, of course, informed his people of his impending arrival by telegram, for the post in the U.S.S.R. is very uncertain so far as my experience of it goes. No doubt this is due

A BANQUET

in part to the censorship and partly to carelessness of postal officials. About fifteen persons were seated at one table or were in other parts of the room, which was barely sufficient to accommodate all of them while allowing for some freedom of movement. The room was bare and squalid, while the room beyond, of which the door was open, completed the apartment, besides a small kitchen.

The party consisted of relations or guests, one of them was a Communist, a young, pleasant fellow. The father and mother were, I judged, over seventy years of age, and looked dull and battered. There was some pork, but very little besides. In fact, the meal was of the very simplest description. Some bread, and a fat in place of butter. There was no milk, but then Russians do not take it with their tea. The quantity of sugar, of which they are very fond, was very, very small for such a number of persons, including some young children, grandchildren of the old couple. They certainly looked to be very badly nourished. Everybody was very courteous. I was not, for obvious reasons, invited to share the meal. My acquaintance's young son was talking to his little cousins. He was very neatly, indeed smartly dressed, whereas the others were in patched rags.

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It looked as if the family were in the direst straits in those horrid, but not rare, surroundings. When I took my leave—it was kinder not to linger long—my acquaintance accompanied me to the courtyard. He had already made some comments on the surroundings while we were in the room, remarking to me that none of the others understood a word of the English language. I asked him what his impression was of what he had seen. He replied in effect :

“I knew things were bad for my parents, and I sent them money from time to time. But I had no idea that they were in this dreadful state. My father is an engineer and his salary is 1,800 roubles monthly. But the number of mouths he has to feed and the extremely high prices are such that they have not seen butter, which costs twelve roubles a pound, for two years. In fact, if it had not been for my help they might have died from starvation. You saw the horrible, tiny dwelling in which they have to live. But it is a palace compared with the apartments of many others of the same standing as my father. Moreover, they have been reduced to such a state that they have no conscience left.”

This account is nearly word for word what my acquaintance said to me. His remarks

COST OF LIVING

about butter, starvation, a palace, and conscience are exactly the words which he used. In imperial Russia these people would have lived in a decent dwelling with a much smaller nominal income. But they could now afford nothing better, indeed scarcely that, owing to dire poverty. Of course, if the father had had nobody except himself, or perhaps a wife and one child to look after, things would have been much easier for him. The old rule that somebody must suffer even if great general improvements are introduced was well exemplified here. Sanitation in the old Russia would have been what has already been described. I did not see the lavatory accommodation in this case; but in view of the Soviet Government's exhortations, and probable inspections from time to time, I am inclined to think that it was much cleaner than it would have been under the old system.

I asked my acquaintance whether his young son, who at the moment had come outside with two little cousins, girls, was horrified at what he had seen.

"Not now," was the reply, "but when we get back to the States the contrast will be sharply brought to his mind. These people are always hungry."

I often heard this remark about hunger from

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all sorts of Russians, who appeared to me to be well nourished. In this particular instance there was no doubt about the hunger. In most of the other cases, however, it may be that the complainants did get enough food to keep them in good health, and Russians usually have very good appetites indeed. It often used to astonish me in imperial Russia to see the vast preliminary meal, called *zakuska*, consisting of all sorts of dishes, which Russians could put away, and then settle down to a very long and hearty dinner, followed perhaps three hours afterwards by a heavy supper. The salary of my friend's father was within two hundred roubles of what a Minister of State would have received in the old days. It is true, however, that the latter would probably have had an official residence, largely maintained for him, and perhaps a sumptuary allowance in addition. But one cannot compare the value of the old and the new rouble. When Count Witte introduced the gold standard in Russia towards the end of the nineteenth century the five-rouble gold coin was the equivalent of seven and one-half paper roubles. But one had for some considerable time great difficulty, except in St. Petersburg and Moscow, in getting the proper change in paper money.

A RETURNED EMIGRANT

Before taking leave of my acquaintance I asked him :

“ Well, you were an ardent Bolshevik. Would you return to this ? ”

“ No, ” he replied.

He had become too prosperous to be prepared to sacrifice material advantages for altruism, especially as he had a family. It was not likely that he would do so. But he did say, and so did other returned emigrants, that there is much in the Soviet system which might, and in time will, they believe, be copied in the capitalist countries with great benefit to all sections of the community, especially in the United States of America. The tussle has already commenced there and is, I think, bound to continue until the present capitalist stranglehold is broken.

It all comes to this : the older people, who are, of course, in the minority, dislike the *na payók* (ration) system, whereas the young never knew anything better, and are aware that there is assured work for them always with good prospects, if they choose to take advantage of their opportunities, besides good holidays and medical care when needed. At the first blush one is certainly inclined to say that the rationing system in the towns leaves very little incentive. But while one cannot

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have much choice in the quality or cut of men's clothing, there is the fact that there is no blind alley for anybody able and willing to work. The contrast with our huge army, some two millions, of unemployed with great numbers of others dependent on them, is truly striking. It does seem to me, as it does to several American capitalists, that a redistribution of our great wealth must inevitably be carried out. In fact, with us the process is already under way.

Apart, however, from the fact that we are over-populated, while the U.S.S.R. is the reverse, we cannot, as already stated, compare the two countries. The comparison is between the two Russias, the one suddenly flung from centuries-old torpor into almost superhuman activity. In so short a period as fifteen years the U.S.S.R. has now undoubtedly acquired a favourable trade balance. Moreover, development of other branches of foreign trade has greatly reduced the export of grain as compared with what it was three or four years ago, while purchases abroad are largely paid for in cash. In other words the citizens are receiving greater benefits.

CHAPTER XI

NEW WORKERS' DWELLINGS

Soviet owns to Suffering—New workers' Dwellings—Food—Care of the Young—Maternal Influence—Rents—Salaries and Wages—Traffic Control—A Dour Communist Relents—The Small World—Emigrants revisit U.S.S.R.—Quality of Soviet Goods

I HAVE endeavoured to give a true picture of the dreadful sufferings of so many unfortunate Russians. The Soviet authorities with whom I discussed the matter frankly admitted it, arguing that the overwhelming mass of the population is better off than formerly, and will be more so when plans are more fully developed. I shall now turn to a brighter side of the picture, and deal with housing accommodation, its cost, wages, and salaries, and the proportion of these which goes in rent. They are all interdependent. It should, however, again be emphasized that there is still a great deal of overcrowding in the towns, which the authorities are partly dealing with by preventing a further large influx.

It has been mentioned that I had seen workers'

NEW WORKERS' DWELLINGS

dwellings elsewhere than in Kiev, not many of them anywhere, but the fact shows that the Soviet Government does not expend all its limited resources, allotted to housing, on cities visited by parties of tourists.¹ I ask pardon for repetition to some extent, but it is essential to bear this truth in mind if one wishes to form a conclusion either for or against the Bolshevik system as compared with pre-war Russia.

I was driving one morning about Kiev when I noticed a very big building of rather peculiar architecture. I did not know what it was intended for, because some of the architecture in the U.S.S.R. seems strange to our eyes. But I am no judge at all in this matter. I stopped my car and inquired what the building was for. I was told that it was a block of workers' dwellings. Leaving the car I asked the house porter (*dvornik*) whether I might be allowed to see a flat or two. He was an old hand at the game and *dvorniks* in imperial Russia were, as now, in the closest touch with the police. They had to report everybody and everything, sometimes no doubt drawing on their imagination. He looked suspiciously at me and inquired whether I was acquainted with anybody living there. My reply being in the negative he asked whether I had permission from some authority to enter.

¹ See Preface.

A SUSPICIOUS PORTER

Again the same answer had to be given. Altogether he seemed rather suspicious of me. Perhaps my good clothes—they were nothing much to look at from our point of view—made him think I might be some kind of counter-revolutionary or in league with counter-revolutionaries.

I began to fear that ingress would be denied me. But I got him to talk about old days in a general sort of way and at last he told me that he himself could not undertake the responsibility of allowing me to enter ; but he would fetch somebody from the office, who turned out to be another very attractive girl. She did not hesitate for a moment, but invited me to accompany her. I explained who I was, and she was much interested.

She said there would be no difficulty in my seeing a flat, or as many as I wished to look over. There was no lift and the building was four stories in height. We climbed to the second floor up the stone stairs (in Russia it is the third floor) and selected a flat at random, where the middle-aged wife of the tenant welcomed me. The building contains one hundred and twenty-four apartments ; but a considerably larger number of families lived there, so my new acquaintance informed me, owing to the shortage of housing accommodation. This first flat which I looked over was occupied only by one

NEW WORKERS' DWELLINGS

tenant, his wife, and daughter. Each flat consists of either two or three rooms, besides bathroom, kitchen, modern indoor sanitation, and electric light. Water supply, steam central heating, and repairs are included in the rent. Everything I saw in this particular flat, and in another one, was very neat and clean. In the second flat, however, there were two small families. The fortunate tenants, even when overcrowded, are infinitely more comfortable than they could have been in one of the regular old pestilential and vermin-ridden buildings which are still so common. What struck me at once was that these workers' flats in the U.S.S.R. have one immense advantage at least over the costly West End London ones, in which I have stayed, for the Russian apartments have full daylight and air on two sides instead of on one only, a tremendous boon for guests and servants.

I asked the lady of the first flat why she was not at work, for it was a working day. The reply was that it was not necessary then for her to go out to work, because her husband was in receipt of a salary sufficient for their needs. He was employed in the Supply Department. The daughter was not at home. She worked in the Arsenal, and the mother kept house for the family. If a tenant, in addition to his rent,

CARE OF CHILDREN

pays an additional sum monthly, varying according to circumstances, for a period of three years, the flat then becomes his own property in the sense that he cannot be evicted and can bequeath it, when he dies, to anybody he may select, whether a relation or not. This extra payment is termed a *pai*, or instalment—hire purchase, in fact. The actual rent is based on space and will be explained later. When every member of a family is at work meals can be provided in the communal dining-room which is attached to the building. Special arrangements are made concerning young children, and they shall now be described.

The Soviet Government takes the greatest care of the young children of workers. Situated not far away from a tenement block is its crèche for young children. One day I noticed a score of tots, about two or three years of age, who were out walking in charge of a crèche nurse. They were dressed in crèche clothing, very nice and neat, and this is exchanged for their own garments before they are returned to their mothers. Some crèches take children aged from three months up to three, in some cases four, years. Others again are for children aged from three years to six. After the age of six they go to a kindergarten, but sleep at home.

Of course, I decided to inspect a crèche,

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namely the one to which the walking party belonged. But it was by no means an easy matter to obtain permission to do this. Eventually, however, after a good deal of confabulation between the matron and some nurses, I was told that I might go over the building. But first of all it was necessary for me to put on a kind of surgeon's overall. On inquiring the reason for this precaution the matron informed me that it was necessary, as my clothes were rather dusty and this might cause infection. This particular crèche has accommodation for one hundred and twenty children—the population is increasing rapidly in the U.S.S.R.—from three months to four years of age. They live in the crèche for the working week of five days, and are then sent to their homes for the “Day Out”, after which they return to the crèche, and so on. I was, however, informed that in some crèches the children are always sent home for the night. But even then there are beds for them in the crèche in order that they may have rest after their midday meal. In one of the rooms I saw about a score of babies waiting for this. They all looked very solemn, but very well nourished and spotlessly clean. This inspection could not have been specially prepared for me, because until about half an hour earlier I had not known that I

MATERNAL INFLUENCE

would visit the place, which I had never heard of.

The question arises whether this system tends to weaken the influence of those mothers who are out at work. I don't know ; but with us, I am informed, some rich people often see very little of their offspring until they are grown up or nearly so. The crèche system, however, does undoubtedly solve the problem for working mothers. And the vast majority to-day in the U.S.S.R. must work.

Closely related to workers' flats or other dwellings is the rent problem. This depends on the floor space which is allotted to a tenant, and also on the salary or wages of the tenant. The underlying feature is that the head of the family is assessed on his pay ; but in some districts the rent is calculated on the earnings of the highest-paid member of the family. If, however, premises are occupied by adults, who are not members of the same family, then each of them is assessed separately for rent on the basis of his individual income. An approximate average for rent is 10 per cent of the income. Wages are by piecework with a guaranteed minimum.

Each tenant pays 42 kopecs monthly for each square metre up to nine square metres when his pay does not exceed 100 roubles per month. If he occupies ten square metres, then he pays

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42 kopecs for each of the first nine metres, 84 for the tenth, and so on up to a maximum of two and one-half roubles monthly. Doctors, teachers, and professional persons generally, are entitled to a minimum of eighteen square metres for each person, in order to allow for the means of carrying on their work. Salaries and wages are calculated on a monthly basis, but are paid fortnightly, namely, on the 1st and 15th of each month.

The salaries of professional and other workers are not necessarily identical, not even for the same work. An engineer, for example, working in Yaroslav may be paid 600 roubles monthly. But if he is performing the same duties in Leningrad he would then be paid only 400 roubles. The great idea, as the Americans say, is to prevent capable people from overcrowding the principal cities too much. Two people, perhaps women, may be performing identical duties in Leningrád and, say, Kiev. In the former city the pay is, we will assume, 250 roubles monthly, whereas in the latter it may be 2,250 roubles for the same period of time. I know of such instances. Some persons are more fortunate than others in the same line of business.

I asked my pretty Ira one day at Kiev why she was idling about, chiefly with Nadya, and

IRA'S FROCKS

sometimes with me. She replied that there was nothing else at the moment for her to do. But I remarked that she was then really over-paid.

"Oh, dear, no. You are quite mistaken, for I am ready here to be called upon whenever my services may be wanted!"

"That is one way of looking at it," I replied. "But even with your handsome salary you wear new frocks at least once a day and sometimes more often. How do you manage it, if it is not an impertinent question?"

"Well, all my dresses are not new, and you see I'm very fond of music, especially the piano, and I give a good many lessons which bring in something additional."

She certainly is far luckier than if she had lived under the old régime which, of course, she had never known. Very prettily dressed she always was.

The traffic management by the police in the U.S.S.R. is admirably carried on, so far as I could see. One excellent rule is that before a car or cab stops to set down or take up passengers it must be turned so as to face in the right direction of the traffic on its particular side of the street. But I need not dilate on this point except just to mention the fact, for traffic management by our police is the most perfect

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thing of the kind in any country which I have visited.

I found chauffeurs and other drivers very interesting to talk to. Very occasionally a Communist driver would hold himself rather aloof at first. But he would always thaw. One day a man was driving me in Moscow. He set me down at the entrance to a long courtyard and hitherto had answered my questions in monosyllables. But he evidently had a tender heart under his somewhat cold exterior, for a heavy shower suddenly burst just as I was leaving the building I had been in. The entrance to the yard was unusually narrow and there were a number of carts encumbering the ground. But my driver forced himself and his car into the throng to take me out dry. A nature's gentleman. It may sound surprising, but there are street urchins in the towns. Quite cheeky to their elders they were, but not to the police, who evidently always tried to make things go smoothly without asserting their authority. I offered the driver just mentioned a cigarette afterwards, but he did not smoke.

Writing of chauffeurs reminds me of an incident which again shows how small the world is. One of them was waiting one day while I was in the car expecting somebody to come out of the house and join me. He looked to be

A SMALL WORLD

about twenty-six years of age, but he turned out to be about ten years older. I made some remark about the World War and then, to my surprise, he informed me that he also had served in it. Asking him where he had been, he replied that at first he was with troops at the front, where the conditions were dreadfully bad. Afterwards, however, he had been selected to join the Tsar's St. George's battalion at his Majesty's General Headquarters at Mogilov, and he had been there during my stay with the Tsar.

Quite by accident, when I was staying at Kiev, I struck up an acquaintanceship with an American citizen, who had emigrated from that city, his birthplace, in the year 1881, at the age of ten, with his parents. This was his first visit to his native land, and he was accompanied by his grandson of twelve years. The grandfather and his wife had decided that it would be wiser for her not to accompany her husband in view of possible discomforts. He had become extremely prosperous in the United States and was accustomed there to travel in a private railway car with all the luxury which this implies. The little grandson was a very nice boy and extremely intelligent. He was always asking his grandparent the reason for this or that, and sometimes—but not often—

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stumped him about some social theories. The pair were travelling, like myself, quite independently and seeing things for themselves.

As in the case of some other returned Russians, mostly Ukrainians, all of them real capitalists, he was strongly anti-Communist, but saw much, he told me, to admire in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and hoped to live to see some aspects of their régime introduced into the United States for the general welfare. These men were not fools, or they could not have risen to the positions which they occupied. I also met a wealthy American fur merchant, who had come over for the July sales. Business in his adopted country was, he said, very bad, so that he had brought a much smaller letter of credit than usual. Still, it was for several thousands of pounds.

One day I asked him about a beautiful sable cape which I had seen in a Torgsin (foreign money) shop. The price was just on £50. He told me that everything sold by the Soviet trading establishments could be absolutely relied on as thoroughly genuine in every respect. I thought the skins must have been dyed. Later on, after my return to England, I saw the same kind of cape in a London catalogue. It was priced at more than three hundred guineas. I purchased some very pretty but

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small articles of jewellery. They were greatly admired by a well-known English jeweller, who told me that the price in this country would have been far higher.

Time passed so quickly at Kiev that I scarcely noticed the days flying past, until it was nearly time for me to begin my journey northwards for Leningrad. I was, however, determined to visit one of the numerous Collective Farms situated in the Ukraine.

CHAPTER XII

COLLECTIVE FARMING

Agriculture Chief Asset—Industry and Exports—Abolition of Serfdom—The Old Land System—A Magnate Economizes—Priests and Education—The Lazy Russian—Drunkenness—Collective Farming—The Old Cottages—*Ikons*—Why Horses are Collectivized—Food on Farms—The Meat Problem—Peasants Slaughter Stock—Difference between State and Collective Farming—Evil-disposed Forces—Horse Breeding—Village Clubs and Wireless—Propaganda Instruction—System no longer Communist

AGRICULTURE always has been and will be for many a long day to come the principal asset of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Oil and the practically limitless mineral wealth, scarcely more than scratched at present, provide resources of almost incalculable magnitude; but agriculture comes first by a long way in spite of the fierce driving power behind industrial expansion on a gigantic scale.

Industry in the U.S.S.R. still has the slothful Russian temperament to contend with. The attempts of wreckers to hinder, if not to prevent altogether, development have undoubtedly caused much delay; but the Russian character has been the chief obstacle to perhaps

VAST DEVELOPMENT OF TRADE

unparalleled progress. The Soviet authorities are, of course, perfectly well aware of this fact. Their aim, amongst other goals, is to surpass American mass production in its hey-day. But the conditions are different, as evidenced by penniless Russian emigrants becoming, and remaining even to-day, great capitalists in the United States.

Nevertheless, the Soviet Government, now impregnable in my opinion, has already enormously developed many highly important branches of export trade. The export of machinery is not yet in the economic picture, but almost every other branch of industry has benefited enormously by the rapid development of foreign trade. Russia has, with the exception of rubber, potential resources of, I think, every description of raw material. Labour, capital, and skilled workers are still required, but the statistics show continual and, on the whole, remarkable progress. Admittedly there is still much leeway to be made up in some respects as compared with the later pre-war years.

But, on the other hand, while the balance of trade in pre-war times was favourable to Russia, much of the proceeds of this balance was sent abroad in payment of interest to foreign holders of Russian debts and securities. At any rate, the exports of the canning industry and of the

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timber trade, to say nothing of other items on the very long list of Soviet exports, are steadily and indeed rapidly increasing in value, and the economic position of the U.S.S.R. is improving in consequence. It can be urged that the repudiation of Russian pre-war debts makes this easy. But the intervention of the Allies during the Civil War caused an amount of damage to Russia which I will not attempt to estimate. I shall only say that in the year 1919 her exports were represented by zero and scarcely more in the following year.

I do believe that the development of Russia's great staple industry, agriculture, is remarkable under the Soviet system. There are, as we know, times when famine cannot be prevented, and drought, of course, as in the year 1934, may cause heavy loss. But the conditions for the peasantry must surely be better now than under the imperial system? To me it is astonishing how Russian agriculture in the past managed to become and remain so important a factor in the economic life of the country when one considers the difficulties it had to contend against, apart from the natural laziness of the Russian. One would have thought that the abolition of serfdom by Alexander the Second, who was afterwards assassinated in the streets of St. Petersburg, must have conferred

SERFDOM

enormous benefits on the peasantry. This was the case in one vitally important respect. Until that great act of humanity was carried out, parents and children were the absolute property of a relatively very small number of territorial magnates.

These grandees held their heads very high. The ancestors of some of them had ruled as autocrats—sometimes over great territories—before the Romanov dynasty had been heard of in the world. No parent could dare to dispute the magnates' will regarding his wife or daughter. Gamblers would play for whole villages and every human being in them. Some magnates were kind-hearted people, others were savagely brutal. This was, of course, to be expected. When the great were brought up from the cradle to believe that only three personalities in the universe counted, namely, God, the Emperor, and themselves, the system was far more to blame than the individuals interested. Who or what was to inculcate more humanitarian ideas in them? The absence of any thought of responsibility towards their humbler fellow-creatures endured until the fall of Tsardom, in a lesser degree it is true, but still there it was. This was the reason why, when the Revolution of March, 1917, followed by the infinitely more drastic outbreak of popular feeling in October of that

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year, burst suddenly upon an amazed world, the magnates, and lesser lights, were submerged by a torrent which nothing on earth could dam.

When the serfs were liberated, in name at any rate, villages acquired a certain amount of land, and families had small holdings. But they were heavily handicapped from the outset by the evils of forced labour. The territorial magnates still retained huge estates, sometimes running into more than a million acres of fine land. A friend of mine was one of these men. He owned much more than a million acres. There were three main-line stations on one of his properties, besides large steel-works managed by Belgian lessees. But the owner told me one day, when I was asking him something about his steel-works, that he had never been near the property since he had inherited it many years previously. As may be imagined, he was not a good business man, at any rate. Among other periodicals he used to take in the *Illustrated London News*. One day, when I was staying with him, I noticed that the paper was not to be seen, and so I asked him whether it had come that week. He said no, because times were so bad that he was at last forced, very unwillingly, to economize and so he had discontinued his subscription. For some reason or another I then asked him about the cost of

THE LIBERATED PEASANTRY

the wood fuel used in that particular establishment. He replied that it had not, fortunately, gone up. It amounted to about £700 annually. But he never gave a thought to the robbery that must have been going on, although he felt compelled to save one item which cost him about £2 a year.

The peasantry, which had too small an acreage for their very modest needs, had really no chance from the outset. Nor was this the sole obstacle which militated against them. The Greek Orthodox Church had, as we have seen, set its face against elementary education in our sense of the word. Apart from the fact that this vastly strengthened the forces of Fear and Superstition, it had two other great faults. One was that the average Russian, being naturally lazy, often left others to do his work on the land, for the Russian, even the Communist, is a very kind-hearted person, as I have already stated. In other words, it constantly happened that the willing did more than their fair share of the work. The other dreadful result of the priestly method was general drunkenness. It was not that peasants, having nothing else to do, or, if they had, neglecting their duty to their families, became violently drunk as I used to see on every Saturday afternoon, when I was a child. They were pleasantly intoxicated.

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Travelling all over Russia in imperial days one would come on a village and find all the adult male population full of liquor. The explanation was that in the Greek Orthodox Church there are some two hundred feast days in every year. The average peasant did little or no work on those days, and he had absolutely no other resource except drink at his disposal. When I was with the Emperor Nicholas at Mogilov in the year 1916 I sometimes questioned several of the women for their opinion of the order forbidding the sale of alcohol during the war, which the Tsar had issued, entirely on his own initiative, some time earlier. They were all enthusiastic in its favour. Drunkenness had almost disappeared; the men gave them more money for their household requirements, and the deposits in the Savings Banks had greatly increased. No doubt to-day, when liquor is obtainable even at one minute past ten o'clock at night, many of the older men find it hard to give up old habits. On the other hand, they are faced with the fact that unless they are sober and work they are likely to be very much under-nourished, if they do not actually die of starvation. The reserves of grain are not for them, but for sale. If they will work they can live.

Considering the very great number of Col-

PRESIDENT OF FARM COUNCIL

lective Farms in the Ukraine alone my difficulty was which of them to select. I did not wish to visit one of the older farms. The collective system had, it is true, been introduced only about half a dozen years ago ; but already in several of the older farms, I was informed by many people, some workers' tenement blocks had been erected and then the old cottages were demolished.

After driving for about twenty miles or so from Kiev I noticed what seemed to meet my requirements. It was a straggling village with the cottages all inhabited ; but along the route from Kiev there had been also several of the usual small holdings to be seen. Calling a halt, a crowd collected almost immediately, chiefly children, for it was the summer holidays. The President of the Farm Council (Soviet) was not in his office, but a messenger was sent to inform him of my arrival. The office building was merely a cottage of the usual type with a table and one small wooden chair ; at least I did not notice any more furniture. It was perfectly clean.

Presently the President arrived. He told me, in answer to my inquiry, that he was forty-five years of age. I thought he looked a good deal younger, and as he was not a Communist it seemed strange to me that a so youthful-looking

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man could be in such a position. He had not been conscripted during the World War, because he was then a teacher. It strikes one as odd that a man of his status should have been selected to be the administrative head of a great agricultural undertaking. He told me, however, that he had always been interested in land problems. While we were talking in his office and I was cross-examining him on various subjects, his assistant, a young Communist, aged from twenty-five to thirty, arrived. The small room was already pretty full of interested listeners, including a number of children.

All the land in that great region is undulating prairie with woods and some marsh or swampy ground. The farm in question is named "The Thirteenth of October" in memory of that revolutionary event, and as thirteen is my lucky number my good goddess Chance had once more decided to show me what I wished to see. Number 13 had been collectivized only three years before my visit, that is to say in the year 1931. It was not, therefore, so fully developed as some of the older farms. It is comprised, of course, of a large number of small holdings.

In some places, I was told, tourists are taken to see a quite up-to-date Collective Farm. This is natural enough, for it shows them the ideal

RELICS OF THE PAST

which is aimed at, but must await realization in so many cases owing to lack of resources, financial and other. In *The Times* of January 2, 1935, there was what must have been an excellent cursory sketch of a highly developed Collective Farm, complete with radios in every cottage, crèche for young children, and other amenities, not forgetting *ikons* or sacred images, which used to be found in every Russian room or shop.

I was fortunate to find what I had been in search of at Number 13, namely the peasantry were living as they used to do under the imperial régime. The small, low, one-roomed cottages, partitioned off by curtains in order to give some degree of privacy, possessed tiny windows which were never meant to open and would not have been opened if they had been. It should be added, however, that there were occasional exceptions to the general rule. But then the Russians are as a body, that is to say the peasant Russians, the finest natural carpenters in the world, or at any rate in Europe.

In some of the cottages which I looked over there was an *ikon*. On the whole I should say the images were in the minority. The acreage was 4,800. Three thousand acres were, I was told—and what I saw confirmed the statement—pasture land, including woods and some marshy ground. The remaining 1,800 acres

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were arable. The number of families was 375, each in its own cottage, so that there was no more overcrowding than was formerly the case. Besides, the peasantry, like sailors, prefer stuffiness indoors. It will, therefore, be seen that the average peasant's holding had been about thirteen acres for each head of a family. The cottages were all constructed of wood as was indeed the case with quite large country houses and often even in towns like St. Petersburg. No construction of tenement blocks for the peasantry had yet been commenced. When this shall have been done the old cottages will, of course, be demolished. The great majority of the adults, male and female, were out at work, and the children especially were intrigued by my presence.

Before deciding to stop at Number 13 I had passed herds of cattle on other collective farms varying from about eighty to a hundred and fifty head. They appeared to be in quite good condition as were the horses. Each *kolkhoznik* (collective farmer) had his original kitchen and flower garden which were well kept. Vegetables and flowers were apparently not suffering from lack of water. He also had some poultry, a cow independently of the collective cattle, and perhaps two or three pigs. The horses were, however, I was informed, all collectivized. There were said to be 134 on this collective

IF A PEASANT DECIDES TO QUIT farm. The horses are collectivized to prevent peasants, who formerly owned a horse and who are dissatisfied with the new system, or who are too lazy, from leaving the farm. In theory a peasant is entitled to do this, for it was found, after all, quite impossible to collectivize quickly on the scale originally laid down. Passive resistance was too strong. If a peasant decided to quit he is entitled to take with him the stock which he brought into the pool. Naturally he cannot withdraw his original small holding from the collective farm, for it will be required for some more willing family. He will be granted a holding somewhere else, perhaps a long way from his original home. The President of the Council and his Communist assistant were very lucid on this point of quitting.

There is a formidable obstacle in the path of anyone who owned a horse and who wishes to revert to his original mode of life. He can take his stock, which he had brought in, if still alive. There is, of course, no difficulty about identifying his poultry, cow, and pigs, for these have been under his own eye. But how is his horse, if still working, to be identified absolutely? It cannot be. At least the Council will not agree to the owner's identification, which comes to the same thing so far as he is concerned. But without his horse how can he bring his

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surplus produce to one of the markets, which may be several miles distant from his home, for sale? Hence quitters are, I was told, with a twinkle in the President's eye, very rare.

Vast numbers of peasants never owned a horse, or only occasionally. This had been the case on Number 13. They had been the poorest of the poor and probably never had anything surplus to sell, or, if they had, they would dispose of it to a wealthier neighbour, who would, if he wished to do so, take it to market. This very poor class were not, so I was informed, quitters. They were infinitely better off under the Collective system, for a living was at least assured to them.

One of the great difficulties in the towns was the issue of the bread ration to those who were in possession of ration cards. This subject is mentioned elsewhere in these pages. In the country, however, the peasants bake their own bread, and very nourishing it is as in former days. During the Russo-Japanese War, in the year 1904, we all had at times to go hungry, because of the failure of the Supply Branch. On those occasions it was either meat or bread, the black ration quality. I knew the bread of old and whenever I got the chance I selected bread instead of meat as did every man who had the opportunity to do so.

THE MEAT PROBLEM

I was well aware of the meat problem during the imperial régime. I was staying once with a magnate's family in St. Petersburg where a grandchild had recently been born, and a wet nurse had been engaged from one of the owner's estates. When the time came for her to return to her peasant's home she burst into tears and implored not to be sent away. She had been paid for the comparatively short time that she had nursed the baby in St. Petersburg probably more wages than she would have earned in, perhaps, years. Her piteous appeal was made on account of the fact that she had been, of course, extremely well nourished during her residence with the magnate's family, and had had as much meat, and fresh meat, as she wanted. She begged to be allowed to remain for no wages, but only for her board and lodging.

The explanation was that in her own home, which was one of the better class of peasants, the family saw meat only twice in the year, namely at Easter, the principal Church festival, and on New Year's Day. The majority of peasants' families, she declared, could have it only once a year, namely, at Easter. This statement was subsequently confirmed to me by other peasants and their wives. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that the peasantry in Russia produced men of magnificent physique,

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due no doubt to the excellent bread and healthy outdoor, if stuffy indoor, life, and weekly bath.

This subject of the meat supply had left a very deep impression on my mind. I had never forgotten it. On looking over the collective farm near Kiev, I therefore questioned some of the older women apart from the President of the local Council and his assistant. One old woman, who had her *ikon* prominently displayed—as indeed had others—looked decidedly dour. She must have been over seventy years old, but I forgot to ask her exact age. I inquired how often the families were eating meat in the year. She replied that they got it fairly often, not, she said, necessarily beef, but meat, including pork. Other women confirmed this, young as well as old, and one of them volunteered the information that it would be issued even more frequently but for one difficulty, at the moment insuperable.

It appeared that when collectivization was first introduced with the usual publication, in the official newspapers, *Pravda* and *Izvestiya*, of the regulations for the new style of farming on a grand scale, the peasantry became alarmed. Overlooking, or not understanding the fact, that collectivization with—in time—plenty of good machinery, the best seeds, and the best obtainable advice, must of necessity be an

STOCK SLAUGHTERED

immense advance on the old system of small holdings without proper implements, the peasants' fright assumed a really disastrous form.

They thought that they could not in the future derive any benefit from the cattle herds, and so they deliberately slaughtered millions and millions of head of stock, on the principle that if they could not have it, nobody else should. This caused a tremendous shortage not only in milk, butter, and meat, but also, of course, in the production of new stock. The Soviet Government at once realized what this blow meant and immediately did everything in its power to remedy the situation. But, of course, whereas great damage can quickly be caused, it often takes a long time to repair it. It is strongly suspected, so I was told by various persons, that the slaughter of cattle on the gigantic scale just described was largely due to evil-disposed persons. They may have been honestly hostile to the new system, but some of them may also have been agents of Foreign Powers. A word here and a word there with an ignorant and superstitious people may spread like wildfire and do incalculable harm. Probably peasants in more highly developed countries would have acted in the same manner as the Russians if somebody had given them the lead. The sad fact remains.

During my stay in Russia in the year 1934

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the official newspapers, *Pravda* and *Izvestya*, published a long official exhortation from the Soviet Government to the effect that the remedies devised for the development of breeding cattle stock had not been properly applied. The results, these newspapers stated, were very disappointing. The subject was of such prime importance that every possible effort must be made to increase production. These announcements also contained a warning to those whose duty it was to give effect to the regulations. Without entering into detail on this point it may be said that the guilty at any rate, if discovered, would get their deserts. Nevertheless, in spite of the great handicap, these peasant women told me that they were undoubtedly eating meat much more often than they would have done under the imperial system.

The younger and the rising generations, of course, have forgotten any different system, if they have been brought up under the conditions of Collective, or State, farming. It has been already stated, but may, perhaps, be repeated, that the difference between State and Collective farming is really one of name only. In both systems the tiller of the soil—a collectivist farmer is not termed officially a "worker", although he has to work as hard as his brother in the State "Factory"—is rewarded according

REWARDS OF FARMING

to his output, that is to say piecework everywhere, and pay according to results either in cash or kind, or both.

On a State farm the workers are paid wages and nothing else. In a Collective farm they share the income of the farm in produce as well as in money. Those who have worked hardest receive the most. Surplus produce may be sold in the markets. A great drawback to the development of Russian agriculture has always been, apart from other factors, the slothful nature of the backward people. Perhaps, owing to their descent, they may always remain lazy by temperament. Certainly the terrific driving force of the Communist Party is doing much to eradicate this failing. If the Russians had been an energetic people and had had a fair chance under the Greek Orthodox Church then, in spite of famines, their competition in the grain markets of the world might have been almost, if not quite, overwhelming for farmers in western lands. The crops at Number 13 seemed to be quite fair considering the drought; but that detestable weed, charlock, was everywhere in evidence in the U.S.S.R. as it is so frequently in England.

New buildings were in course of construction, and a new stable of wood was nearly finished. The workmanship on the logs was, as is usual

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in the U.S.S.R., excellent. Hitherto the horses remained out during the year. The winter in Russia is severe everywhere, but in some of the worst parts it is astonishing how ponies and horses can scrape a living from underneath the snow.

My visit to Number 13 was extremely interesting. All were certainly well nourished, and the clothing was not changed in appearance. The Communist assistant was very courteous and laid some stress on the difficulty of rapid development with limited resources. There were, he told me, some tractors and other agricultural machinery on the farm, but not sufficient. He also declared that it was kept in quite fair working order; he did not pretend that everything was perfect. It is, of course, far easier for a foreigner, who has known a country under one system, to get on with representatives of a new one, provided he can see things from their angle, although he may not always agree with them.

It was frequently astonishing for me to see what progress has already been made considering the naturally lazy Russian temperament which must still be there among the older adults. I have no doubt that this has been the prime cause of the failure to get better results in the breeding of cattle. "It doesn't matter, or at any rate it will do to-morrow or

FORMER FORCED LABOUR

the day after, *potóm.*" Of course the evil-disposed forces would aggravate the situation. I have repeated this statement, for one must always bear the actual conditions in mind in order to form a conclusion for or against the Soviet system on the whole.

The development of Number 13 had evidently been well planned from the beginning, for a large and well-equipped workshop had been, I was told, the first thing to be constructed. The variety of tools must have surprised most, if not all, of the peasants, who in former days had been accustomed to work with the rudest implements. With very rare exceptions the territorial magnates did nothing to help those people, who nevertheless had to work for those great persons on specified occasions. But this was symptomatic of the old Russia. A friend of mine, of huge wealth and holding one of the highest posts at the Imperial Court, told me once that he had been breeding some new what he termed "bloodstock". This was a misnomer. He had put a half-bred Barbary arab to a Suffolk punch and other breeds, he told me. I remarked that the produce would not be of much value except, perhaps, as a freak. But he explained that all he required was some more horses of some, of any, kind, from animals already in his possession, and

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that it didn't matter what their shape or size might be. Any of the produce would soon be able to work on the land. A horse was a horse and that was all he cared about.

As attention has been drawn to the prevalent drunkenness in imperial Russia, especially among the peasantry, who lived such a dreadfully dreary life at the best of times, it should also be stated that the Soviet Government took, at a very early date, the question of entertainment for the peasants' families in hand. I saw no wireless receiver in any of the cottages which I visited on Number 13. But there was the village club with papers, some books, games of a simple description, and the wireless loud speaker. It is true that most of what comes through the ether is forceful propaganda; but some of it is interesting. Stories, true ones—I've heard some—are told of how the people lived under the imperial system, and interesting lectures are given from time to time, also dialogues, and statistics which are said to interest great numbers. Excellent concerts and popular plays are also given. I listen in occasionally when at home.

The propaganda and statistics, especially the latter, would not appeal to our workers, of whom the overwhelming majority are far more interested in football, the turf, greyhound racing, and cricket when their day's work is finished.

DIFFERENT JOBS PAID DIFFERENTLY

All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy. But for the average Russian propaganda is largely play. We cannot, as has been stated more than once in these pages, compare the two peoples. I saw numbers of persons, mostly young men, stopping to listen to the bellowing of loud speakers in the railway stations and in the streets. If we think of the life which the peasant used to live in former days one can understand that even dull propaganda is something new and interesting, perhaps actually refreshing for him. In these village clubs people get together and this naturally leads to conversation and argument, a very good thing. They are encouraged by the authorities, so some peasants told me, to send in suggestions concerning the working of the system on, say, collective farms.

I have already said that although the Communists, a very small body relatively, rule Russia very firmly indeed, the system to-day, and for some years past, is not really Communist. Here is an instance in support of this statement. The members of Collective farms, generally speaking, share between them the income in produce as well as in money. Those who have worked hardest receive the most. *But different jobs are paid differently.* For example, night-watchmen receive less than drivers for the same number of hours worked.

CHAPTER XIII

A GLOOMY FORECAST

The Imperial Army—Russo-Japanese War—A Gloomy Forecast
—An Outpost Commander—Tsaritsa on Kuropatkin—Glimpse
of the Red Army

IT would be presumptuous for me to attempt to compare the Army of the U.S.S.R., about half of it being good Communists, with the Imperial Army. As shall be presently related I saw only a tiniest fraction of the former, accidentally it is true, but still only a wee fragment. On January 30, 1935, it was announced at Moscow that its peace strength now exceeds 900,000, that is to say it is nearly twice as numerous as the figure previously registered at Geneva, namely, 562,000. The reason for this tremendous increase, when the Soviet Government is hampered by want of sufficient means for social and economic development, is, of course, due to the situation in the Far East. Moscow is obviously not aggressive; it cannot afford to be; but although its communications with the Far East are far better

THE IMPERIAL ARMY

than during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5, Vladivostok remains thousands of miles away from central Russia. The Soviet wishes to be impregnable to attack. I confess that I myself cannot believe any Japanese statesman is prepared to attempt to conquer Eastern Siberia, a climate so utterly unsuited for his race. Before saying anything, however, about the Red Army it is desirable to refer first to the Imperial one. I had had the great advantage of an intimate acquaintance with it in peace and war, whereas I can give only a cursory impression for what it is worth concerning Red troops.

When I was Military Attaché at St. Petersburg during the closing years of the nineteenth century I watched troops in most parts of the empire at their field training. The impression left on my mind was that they were more efficient on the drill and parade grounds than in actual military exercises. They were magnificent when marching past. Battalions moved as one man. A sentry was never permitted to answer a question put to him by a passer-by. On one occasion, not feeling sure that I had arrived at the correct address, I made inquiries from the sentry. He gazed stolidly at me and never batted an eyelid. When the question was repeated the result was the same. He

A GLOOMY FORECAST

dared not answer me. This was in my early days.

Nevertheless, when the Russo-Japanese War broke out in the year 1904, my confidence in a great Russian victory, and an early one, was not to be shaken. Seven years previously I had spent a short time in Japan and had been shown some of the troops in Tokyo, where I also made the acquaintance of the Minister of War and that of the Chief of the General Staff. The troops did not impress me, accustomed as I was to the Russian stolidity. The frequent interruptions by relatively junior officers, when the Minister of War or the Chief of the General Staff was talking to me, struck me as evidence of Japanese frivolity and superficiality.

In the year 1904, however, I had the good fortune to represent the War Office as its British representative with the Russian army. I did not remain long with Kuropatkin's Headquarters. He was an old friend of mine, and told me how he was hampered at every stage by the Viceroy. I joined the force which had been hurriedly collected together in order to attempt the relief of Port Arthur. The attempt ended in a disastrous defeat, and already I had noticed that the Russian soldiers were handled as if they were mere machines. Shortly

A FORECAST

afterwards I met at Liaoyan an old German friend, Colonel von Lauenstein, the Kaiser's representative, and told him that the Russians would never win a victory during the war. He could not then credit my statement. But they never did. This does not, of course, reflect in the very slightest degree on the superb bravery of officers and men. It was the system under which they had been trained.

In my report on the campaign to the War Office I wrote :

In the campaign of 1904 the Russian officers were no more efficient than authentic history shows them to have been in the Turkish war, and I place no credence in the theory of some that the present conflict will teach them a lesson not to be forgotten.

It has already been mentioned that the late Lord Esher, in the year 1907, wrote to King Edward that war with Russia on the North-West frontier of India was the gravest military problem which his Majesty's army could be called upon to meet. In October, 1905, I had reported " I am satisfied that she cannot attack India."

One other quotation may, perhaps, be permitted in view of the situation as it is to-day, for the general consensus of opinion outside Russia is, so far as I am aware, very appreciative of the efficiency of the Red Army. In 1905 I wrote :

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It might have been thought that the first reverses suffered by the Russian arms at the hands of a despised enemy would have induced officers to put their shoulders to the wheel, but after living with them in the field for many months, I saw no sign of improvement. I have, therefore, come to the conclusion that Russia will not, in the future, emerge victorious from a struggle with a Great Power.

It was always incomprehensible to me that the military advisers of the British Government could have brought themselves to persuade it to rely so greatly upon Russia as a partner of the Entente. I suppose that in this case as in so many others they believed what they wished to believe. As I am not writing after the event in my criticisms concerning the Russian imperial army it is perhaps worth while to record a couple of instances out of many known to me. My opinions partly (but not, I must admit, chiefly) helped to blast my military career!

General Stakelberg, to whose forces I had attached myself, was the ablest among the Russian commanders of my acquaintance. On August 19, 1904, I accompanied him on a visit to the outposts of the 4th Siberian Army Corps. It was intended to be a surprise early morning call. We should, indeed, have arrived earlier than was the case, namely, about 7.30 a.m., but for the fact that Stakelberg's Staff

A SLEEPY GENERAL

were, like myself, uncommonly poor map readers. We lost our way, and this had delayed us for about an hour and a half.

The great battle of Liaoyan was imminent. It was hitherto the biggest fight, as regards numbers, ever staged in the world. The officer in command of the outpost force, a large one, was discovered comfortably asleep in bed. Stakelberg had not given his servants time to call him. His name was Baron Rehbinder. I had known him long before the Russo-Japanese War when he was a Guards' officer in St. Petersburg. He was just one of the usual type, very pleasant, and fond of social life in its various gay Russian aspects.

The distribution of his troops, which Stakelberg extracted from him with some difficulty, was evidently a very foolish one, and when we got him up and dressed and started for the inspection Rehbinder did not know where to cross the river, a very sizable and generally unfordable obstacle, in order to reach his own men! Fortunately we were able to effect the passage by a ford some distance away owing to the help of some of Rehbinder's subordinates.

When I had first joined Stakelberg's force he had been decidedly cool and reserved; but we soon became fast friends and he kept me fully informed of his intentions and always

A GLOOMY FORECAST

took me with him on his excursions. Stakelberg let himself go on this occasion in my presence and in that of other officers. Rehbinder took his gruelling manfully and did not attempt to excuse himself beyond saying that he thought everything would turn out all right. But he told me afterwards, before we started on our return journey, and when we happened to be alone for a few moments, that he thought Stakelberg had been very inconsiderate in rating him in the manner which he had done, as they were old personal friends from their Guards' days! In my report on the campaign I wrote the following words: "I should say that Rehbinder is a fair specimen of a Russian general officer." Stakelberg, it will be readily understood, was extremely unpopular with most, if not indeed with all of his generals and other officers except his own Staff.

I was, therefore, in no way surprised when, in the year 1914, Rennenkampf and Samsonov, entirely through their own laziness, brought about the terrible disasters to the Russian armies. Samsonov shot himself. I had known them both well when in the Manchurian campaign.

Writing about another Russian general officer in the Russo-Japanese War I said:

IMPERIAL DISCIPLINE

He was given a command in China in 1900, and is commonly reported to have shown himself a very inefficient commander there. In 1904 he was given a division, when his first essay resulted in his troops becoming panic-stricken owing to his direct disobedience of orders, which might have led to the surrender of the Russian army at Liaoyan. He certainly has protections of some kind, feminine or other, for he was given a still larger force not long afterwards, but not by Kuropatkin. It is a marvel to me how the Russian troops, brave as they certainly are, put up with the utterly incompetent officers so frequently set over them.

There was also the case of another Russian general officer, who, without saying a word to any of his superiors, left his command during the battle of the Sha-Ho, which lasted for ten days, when the Russian forces were retreating from Liaoyan to Mukden. He went straight home to St. Petersburg where he was very soon given a command there. Not long afterwards I was on my way to England as the War Office wished to hear about the campaign, and I had an audience of the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna after I had seen the Tsar. We talked about the ill fortune which had dogged the footsteps of the gallant Russian armies.

Her Majesty severely criticized Kuropatkin for the defeats. I pointed out, however, that he had always been strongly opposed to inciting Japan to go to war, for he knew Russia was not ready and that a conflict would cost her

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immense sums with nothing to show for them after perhaps a two-years' struggle. Kuropatkin was proved to be abundantly right in his forecast, which he had himself communicated to me soon after I joined his General Headquarters in April, 1904. The last thing he had desired, he had told me, was to be the Commander-in-Chief, especially as he was subject to the over-riding authority in military methods of the Viceroy, an admiral. But the reigning Empress, among other high personages, had been determined that Kuropatkin, a hero of the Transcaspian War, should assume the nominal command in chief.

The defeats had, however, caused the Empress to change her mind concerning Kuropatkin's military capacity. He had always had, it should be mentioned, fierce enemies at the Russian Court and in St. Petersburg society, a very powerful, if small numerically, body. My argument on behalf of Kuropatkin had no effect. Her Majesty did not resent in the slightest degree what I said, but her mind was made up and that was the end of the matter. Kuropatkin was soon afterwards superseded by a man of far inferior capacity who completed Russia's defeat.

During my audience of the Empress in reply to some remark of mine concerning Kuropatkin

EMPRESS ON KUROPATKIN

and his subordination to the Viceroy, her Majesty said: "Yes, but I have heard about him from our own officers who have returned from Manchuria."

"Yes, Ma'am," I replied, "but those are the men who had been intriguing against him; one of them left his troops in action because General Kuropatkin did not send him reinforcements."

My explanation had no effect whatever; but her Majesty continued to be as gracious and pleasant as she always had been to me after I had got to know her when I was Military Attaché years previously in St. Petersburg. She did not, for example, tell me I was an impudent fellow and order me out of her presence. She would invariably listen very patiently and argue, but her opinions ever remained unchanged.

I should add that these remarks and quotations do not infringe that exceedingly comprehensive Statute, the Official Secrets Act. Quite apart from the fact that, since the termination of the World War, it became the fashion for Cabinet Ministers and ex-Cabinet Ministers to divulge all sorts of secret documents, often for highly remunerative prices, copies of my report on the campaign in Manchuria were issued in large numbers to the regular and

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auxiliary forces. Although marked "Confidential" they were constantly, so I was told and saw for myself, left lying about in ante-rooms for any chance visitor to read. I mention the fact to guard my declining days.

Lord Esher's view about Russia was not always accepted, however. The late General Sir James Grierson wrote a letter, which was later on given to me. In it he wrote that I had "seen and done more than any other of our officers at the seat of war, and I trust he will have his reward". It is not likely to come now! I mention this, because I was sure that in the World War the Russian armies, magnificently brave as they were, would be no more efficient than they had been ten years previously. This is a lengthy preamble, due to my undiluted vanity—I have nothing more solid to go upon—to some cursory remarks about the present Red Army.

When I went to the U.S.S.R. in the year 1934 I had no intention of asking to be allowed to see something of the Red troops. My request would, no doubt, have been readily complied with. I would have been taken to a parade ground, seen some evolutions, and that would necessarily have been all. But my good goddess, Chance, came to my rescue again. During my drive in search of a Collec-

SPECIMENS OF U.S.S.R. ARMY

tive Farm I was fortunate enough to come upon a considerable number of infantry, engineers, armoured cars, and tanks about a dozen miles or so from Kiev.

The men were all of excellent physique and were in serviceable khaki. As in old days they wore their greatcoats rolled over one shoulder. The weather was decidedly hot in the blazing sun ; but the idea was and is still to keep men fit for service. This chance inspection was, of course, extremely interesting for me. I was really astonished at the celerity of the movements of all the different arms. Engineers were laying field telephones and were running instead of walking at a leisurely pace. There was evidently good discipline and intelligence everywhere. Of course, the number of troops seen by me was just an exceedingly small fraction of the Red Army, but perhaps it was a fair sample of the whole. Commands were promptly carried out, whereas off duty, as I had noticed at railway stations and elsewhere, officers and men are comrades without distinction of rank. It may be mentioned that the word " officer " is no longer in use. Troops are led by " leaders ". The armoured cars were of medium size and the tanks were small ones. If the specimens of the Red Army which I saw on this occasion

A GLOOMY FORECAST

were representative of the remainder, then that army must, I think, be a very efficient instrument. It was quite a long time before I was clear of the manœuvre ground, and I was proceeding slowly with occasional halts to look more closely at what was going on. Nobody took any notice of me at all.

One should not, of course, attempt to generalize from particulars, and the samples which I accidentally saw of the Red Army might have happened to be super-excellent ; but they had not been produced for my benefit. What I did observe, however, agrees with what has been told me from competent officers, who are not Russian, namely that the Red Army is very efficient. There must be, I imagine, latent military instincts in the Russian, for it was truly marvellous how the ragged, hungry, and ill-equipped Bolshevik troops succeeded in smashing the infinite resources of the Allied intervention.

CHAPTER XIV

SECRET TREATIES

Coronation at Moscow—Secret Treaties—Permanent Officials—Sazonov on Germany and War—He visits Balmoral—Civilians in Modern War—I visit Soviet Foreign Office—M. Rubinin—Anxiety in Moscow—Sazonov's Report of 1912—Am detained on Departure—Russian Methods—Industrial Competition—A Vast Market for England—Business Delays—Comparison of Old with New—Political Crisis in 1894—Hiring a murderer—The Admiral and his Wife—Freedom of Movement in 1934—The Five Years' Plans—The Soviet's Difficulties—The Future in the U.S.S.R.—Tourists in U.S.S.R.

THE day came at last when, to my great regret, it was necessary for me to turn my steps in a homeward direction, as business in England demanded my return. My intention was to travel to Moscow, partly to see more of the country and the people at railway stations when travelling as before by a train which was not the fastest between the two cities, and partly because I was anxious to be permitted to see a particular document in the archives at Moscow. The train journey was, like that from Leningrad to Mogilov and Kiev, devoid of excitement, and as usual the train was punctual to within a few minutes. Some delay

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had been caused by relaying part of the track.

Nadya and I had taken an affectionate farewell of Ira, who would have dearly loved to come to Leningrad, not entirely, I am afraid, for our sakes. Still, one can't have everything. The last time that I had slept in Moscow had been when I was with the Duke of Connaught during the Coronation festivities in the year 1896. Those three weeks are never to be forgotten. I accompanied his Royal Highness on horseback in the gorgeous procession of the Tsar Nicholas and the Tsarina Alexandra Feodorovna to the ancient capital from the Petrovsky Palace, which is situated two or three miles outside Moscow.

The appearance of that great metropolis had undergone a marked change for the better since my last visit to it. Important streets had been excellently paved in place of the old cobble stones, many fine new buildings had been constructed, and altogether the city looked very handsome. Several improvements had, however, been carried out before the outbreak of the World War, so some Soviet officials informed me ; but their Government has gone ahead more rapidly, and fine new buildings are under construction while old ones are being demolished. I think I would have

SECRET TREATIES PUBLISHED

visited Moscow in the year 1934 if only for sentimental reasons. But I had a more definite object in view.

Almost immediately after the Bolsheviks seized the reins of power in 1917 they began the publication of State papers of the highest importance. They commenced with the issue of the many secret treaties which had been concluded between the Allies at a time when they were counting their chickens before they were hatched. The interests of civilization and freedom were the slogan. Fancy the general run of the politicians, who brought about the world cataclysm, having the audacity to talk and write about civilization and freedom ! This remark applies to the French and Russian ministers and diplomatists. Our own statesmen certainly loathed the idea of war—with the exception, perhaps, of Mr. Winston Churchill, who honestly believed, I am sure, that it would eventually redound to the great benefit of his own native land. But, apart from that wonderful man, our statesmen did not really believe that war would come during their tenure of office, at any rate.

At the same time, while they had been perfectly truthful when they denounced war as a crime, they none of them wished to see their handiwork to prevent the catastrophe exposed

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to the world. The Bolshevik Government thought otherwise. It knew perfectly well that the Russians had never cared a straw for Constantinople, which they had mostly never even heard of. They wished only to be permitted to live in peace. The same feeling prompts our own people and indeed all truly civilized nations.

Those first publications by the Bolsheviks were unquestionably genuine. There was no need to doctor them. Some attempts were made at first, it is true, to suggest falsification, but they failed utterly. Although our statesmen had the least dirty political hands, our Foreign Office, that is to say the great heads of departments who are the power behind the throne, had always prevented publication of important documents until after the deaths of those who were primarily concerned in negotiations.

In the year 1924, however, the first Labour Government came into office, and to Mr. Ramsay MacDonald's lasting credit, in this one respect at least, he ordered the publication of our documents. The German Social Democratic Government had already taken a more comprehensive view, and had commenced their series at a date much further removed than ours. Other Powers gradually followed suit.

But there is a reservation to be made. With

DOCUMENTS EDITED

the exception of the Bolshevik and German State papers those of Great Powers have been "edited", our own less so than others, but the British documents do not contain what those who know of them consider to be some papers of great importance. I am inclined to think that these were not shown to the editors, for in at least one instance Dr. Gooch and Professor Temperley threatened resignation from the editorship, I understand, unless they should have absolute freedom of choice in selecting documents for publication.

Some matter, which they published, gave rise to a strong attempt to prevent the publication in future of memoranda drawn up by permanent officials on the ground that Ministers alone decide. If it had been urged that only Ministers of the Crown can be responsible for any action taken by a Government of the day that would have been an unanswerable argument. But to urge that permanent officials have really no influence with the temporary Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs is childish, and merely shows to what straits the sponsors of the argument were put.

Many of the Russian archives were translated and published in other countries, but very few, if any, saw the light in England. I had read many in the original Russian, and had

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also compared a very large number of the French and German translations with the originals. They were all admirable translations.

I was already aware, long before I visited Russia in 1934, that the late M. Sazonov, who was Foreign Minister in Russia until the summer of 1916, had paid a series of visits abroad in September and October, 1912, and that he had written a voluminous report on his travels for the Emperor Nicholas in November of that year. To digress for a moment, older people, who remember the outbreak of the World War in August, 1914, will recollect how the three allied Governments of Great Britain, France, and Russia with one accord broadcast the statement that Germany, or at any rate the Kaiser and his myrmidons, had deliberately planned the cataclysm. Indeed, one lady, who wrote a best seller, made out that Frederick the Great, when most friendly with France, for which he had a great admiration at one time, had actually planned the outbreak for August, 1914! This sort of thing still persists in quarters where one would expect to find more intelligence.

During the journey just mentioned Sazonov visited Germany. In his report to the Tsar he expressed his conviction that war in the Balkans was the last thing which her Govern-

SAZONOV VISITS ENGLAND

ment wished for. It feared that a Balkan war might, as was eventually the case, precipitate a world catastrophe. Sazonov was positive that the Kaiser and his Government would, if war should come in the Balkans, do their utmost to localize the conflict.

What interested me most about his journey was his visit to England in September, 1912. He was invited to Balmoral and, of course, met Sir Edward Grey there. On the fifth of that month he noted that Grey was clear that England would back France actively with all her resources in the event of another Franco-German conflict, which was, of course, certain to include Russia, France's ally. Belgium and violation of her territory were not in the picture. Indeed, the late Lord Morley shows, in his *Memorandum on Resignation*, that as late as August 3, 1914, her situation was not considered. The question in dispute in the Cabinet was whether England was to fight for France in any circumstances. Grey had previously told Benckendorff, a sincere lover of peace and Russian Ambassador in London for many years until the Russian revolution, that England would back France. This was in the year 1911, and he said the same thing on other occasions. But Mr. Asquith and Grey always strenuously denied in Parliament that there

SECRET TREATIES

was any foundation whatever for our people—and their representatives—to suspect this. The truth is that our military leaders of the day had persuaded those Ministers that it would be an easy matter to smash Germany in six months, and very likely in three, and that then we should, as Lord Esher also believed, pick up all German foreign trade and live soft for ever afterwards.

There was some very straight speaking during Sazonov's visit to Balmoral. One phrase used was :

“ We shall sink every single German merchant ship we can get hold of.”

In my opinion this was a perfectly legitimate thing to say. But when the Germans were doing the same thing to us there was a violent outcry. If war does come it must either be war, and every effort to smash the enemy as quickly as possible should be made, or else one can do, as suggested by a leading military writer, all sorts of things to make war and suffering practically negligible. In this case war might conceivably become a paying proposition for all nations concerned.

In the year 1934 there was a lengthy correspondence in *The Times* concerning the safety of the civil population in time of war. I wrote a letter pointing out that nowadays there is

MODERN WAR

no civil population. All are without exception, including the maimed, the halt, and the blind, combatants. Women are employed in making munitions and other indispensable articles. Babies must be fed, or they will die of starvation. But their food may be urgently required for troops in the field. My letter was not published. To say that one weapon is offensive and that another is not is childish. A revolver bullet can inflict injuries for life so terrible that death would be preferable. One might just as well urge the abolition of gunpowder, and especially of high explosives, and go back to bows and arrows. In that event Germany would be in a more commanding position than she already holds, because she has a much greater white population than we have and a far larger one than France.

I think that the phrase about sinking every German merchant ship was a very proper one to employ. But then we ought not to have complained when the boot was on the other leg. I was curious to see the original of Sazonov's report to the Emperor Nicholas of November, 1912. By the good offices of the Soviet Ambassador in London, M. Maisky, I had a letter of introduction to M. Rubinin, the chief of the Western Department of the Russian Commissariat for Foreign Affairs. Of course,

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there was the possibility that the report had been destroyed during the revolutionary fighting.

While I was staying at Moscow I, therefore, called upon M. Rubinin at his office in the *Narkomindel*. When the Bolsheviks came into power they gave new and proletarian names to all sorts of offices and things. Some of these new titles form of themselves a rather lengthy sentence. In order, therefore, to save time—this struck me, who was acquainted with the old Russia, as odd—the titles have been abbreviated. There are, of course, so many of them that one can sometimes, rarely but occasionally, trip up an official by asking him the meaning of some particular abbreviation. *Narkomindel* means in English the National Commissariat for International Affairs (*Narodny Kommissariat Internationalnikh Dyel*).

On arriving at the Soviet Foreign Office I was rather severely questioned as to what I wanted, for I had unfortunately omitted to make an appointment with M. Rubinin beforehand. But eventually when he heard I was in the building I was immediately conducted to his anteroom where I was not kept waiting for more than a moment. He came out to welcome me and we went into his room.

He was most agreeable and we talked for a considerable time about my visit to the U.S.S.R.

REVOLUTION MEANS BLOODSHED

I told him of my ramblings into back alleys and of the dreadful sufferings, due chiefly to hunger, which I had seen there. He did not attempt to minimize them or deny that the number of miserable beings concerned is very large, if only a fraction of the entire population. He argued that the crash resulting from the overthrow of the imperial régime was, and had to be, with such a backward people, so catastrophic that great numbers of older people, unable perhaps to work, must undergo fearful hardships pending further development of the Soviet system. M. Rubinin was not the only official or Communist who held this view. The problem is so complex. But he could point, as others have done, to the fact that only about fifteen years ago the Bolshevik régime had to start literally from bed-rock, without experience, money, or credit. The vast change for the better already effected cannot truthfully be disputed. M. Rubinin was very glad to discuss the manifold social and economic problems. I believe him to be sincere and, like most Russians, kind-hearted. To put it briefly, some must suffer for the general welfare. But this is not peculiar to the U.S.S.R.

I was surprised to learn from him that there was in Moscow real anxiety concerning a

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possible or probable economic war against Russia on the part of England and especially the United States of America. My view was that the Soviet Ambassadors in London and Washington did not share this opinion, and that the authorities in Moscow, not so well acquainted with foreign views as their representatives abroad, were unduly pessimistic. I could not credit that any British Government would again try to strangle Anglo-Russian trade. As regards the United States I was quite confident that they are too fully occupied with their own woes to wish to hamper their own commerce still more. M. Rubinin was, however, as might have been expected, better informed than myself. According to a cablegram from New York, on February 4, 1935, to *The Times*, an economic war seems highly probable. It should benefit British trade, so that the U.S.A. would be the chief sufferer.

The chief purpose of my visit to M. Rubinin was to see Sazonov's report of November, 1912, to the Emperor Nicholas, if it should be still in existence. The Soviet Ambassador in London, M. Maisky, had, I found, very kindly written to M. Rubinin on the subject, and this gentleman sent for the report when I arrived at the *Narkomindel*. It was handed to me to read at my leisure, and it is a lengthy

MY EXIT BARRED

document of which there is not, so far as I am aware, a full translation either in English, French, or German. The Russian typewriter cannot, of course, reproduce all our letters of the alphabet; for example, there is in Russian no letter "c" or "h." M. Sazonov had surmounted this difficulty—as he wished to quote also in English the actual words used at Balmoral—by adding them to his report in manuscript. The language was exactly as has been already quoted word for word. A summary of Sazonov's report is to be found in the French work by M. René Marchand, *Un Livre Noir*, Volume II, page 348. A German edition of the correspondence of the late M. Izvolsky, Russian Ambassador in Paris before and during the World War, also contains the report.

When I had taken leave of M. Rubinin I proceeded towards the door at the main entrance to the building by which I had entered it. But an official stopped me and asked for my permit to leave. This had never occurred to M. Rubinin; we had been so busy gossiping, and not invariably on serious subjects. As regards myself I was not aware of the stringent rule in Moscow. At Mogilov, for instance, no notice whatever, except here and there a cursory, uninterested glance, had been taken of me when Nadya and I walked about the

SECRET TREATIES

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building containing the central administrative offices of the region, although notices were placarded about the place forbidding unauthorized persons to enter. It had really astonished me that nobody inquired what my business was, for I had heard stories of inoffensive tourists on beaten tracks being arrested because they had stopped for a moment to look through a window. I suppose the explanation was that it had been taken for granted that I had business in the place, which was not on the tourist track, and that otherwise I would never have dared to walk in uninvited.

But in Moscow it was different and I had neither a paper to show that admission was to be granted to me, nor one to prove that I might again emerge without being taken to prison. I explained the situation to the official and said I would run upstairs and ask M. Rubinin for a permit to go out. Then it occurred to me to explain that he was very busy. We had been a long time together and many people had been waiting to see him, so that I would not like to trouble him, if this could in the circumstances be avoided. Much to my surprise, remembering that in the old Russia an order was an order to be strictly carried out, the guardian relented and permission was granted me to take my departure.

INDUSTRIAL COMPETITION

I would willingly have spent several days in Moscow ; but time was getting on, and I wished to revisit some of my old haunts of St. Petersburg days in Leningrad.

Quite by accident I met during my stay in Moscow in 1934 the managing director of a great Manchester manufacturing firm. He was there on business about concluding a contract. He was too young to have known the old Russia, and was often vexed by the dilatory habits of the Russians concerned and the tedious delays. The idea was partly to get the best possible terms from the English firm, but a prime cause was, of course, the naturally slow methods inherent in the Russian temperament. Procrastination is, as Soviet officials have told me, one of their own greatest difficulties.

This English gentleman asked me whether I thought that industrial competition on the part of the U.S.S.R., closely organized as it is in one centre, is likely to be a menace to our own industry. What may happen in the distant future I cannot, of course, pretend to forecast. It does not really matter, because by the time that Russian industry shall have been so far developed as to be a very strenuous competitor in the markets of the world, very many other great changes will have occurred on the earth. For the time being, I said, my belief

SECRET TREATIES

is that a vast Russian market is waiting for us to take advantage of for our mutual interests.

My acquaintance had come to the same conclusion, believing, as he does, that the happy-go-lucky Russian temperament will not be radically changed for a long time to come. This agrees with what the Scottish chief engineer of a Black Sea battleship told me many years before 1914. The subject will be referred to in my remarks on education in the new Russia. When tourist parties are taken to see factories where everything is in good order—showing that good order and efficiency are attainable—they are accompanied by highly trained workers, whose intelligence is above that of the average.

To conclude contracts with the Soviet authorities is undoubtedly a matter requiring far more time than would be the case if English firms alone should be concerned. But then trade instincts have been for centuries part of the British make-up. In Russia it has been very different, and so those Soviet representatives, who are engaged in drawing up contracts with foreign firms, are naturally extremely cautious. One reason is that the foreigner, of course, wishes to arrange for as large a profit as possible. The Russian opposite number, however, while not objecting to this, must be

CAUTION IN CONTRACTS

very careful not to give away more than can possibly be helped. If he should do so, then, when the terms of a contract come to higher authority for scrutiny, an error of judgment which may be discovered is likely to have extremely unpleasant results for the Russian drawer of the contract. Penalties in the U.S.S.R. are extremely severe. If a Communist official, for example, be detected in some speculation or other malpractice he will probably be shot out of hand on the principle that such persons are better out of this world.

But we ought to compare the new with the old system, of which I can write with a good deal of experience. Under the Empire, for some reason or other, the military officials were usually very good to me—chiefly because the Russian authorities of those days knew well, by tests, that I never once mixed myself up in espionage work. It would have been contemptible for a British Military Attaché to have thus lowered his position. Another reason was that there was, so far as my own country was concerned, nothing secret of any importance. Any intended aggressive action on the part of the Russian Government would certainly soon have leaked out before anything could happen. A third reason was that by keeping myself perfectly clear of anything distasteful to

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the Russian imperial authorities they were very helpful to me when the occasion arose, as it did concerning more than one important problem.

For example, no British officer had been permitted to set foot in Transcaspia and Russian Central Asia for about a quarter of a century when a collision suddenly occurred between Russian and Afghan troops on the newly delimited frontier in the region of the Murghab river. Not only the Government of India passed sleepless nights—for the Russian invasion of India via that impracticable route was now surely under way—but the Foreign Office in London was also terribly upset.

Obviously the best thing to be done would be for me to go and inquire into the fracas on the spot. When I put forward my request to the Russian Minister of War, General Vannovsky, who, being of Polish descent, was reputed to be moré Russian than the Russians themselves, it was immediately granted. My investigations entirely absolved the Russian forces, for their leader, the celebrated General Ionov, the stormy petrel in that distant part of the world, actually gave me his own private diary to read. He had never dreamt that a British officer would be permitted to set foot in the explosive region. Relations between London and St. Petersburg improved greatly

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA AND RUSSIA

at once, and my own authorities patted me on the back. This excursion did not, therefore, help to make me a back number, as did my unfortunate, if true, forecast of the year 1905 concerning a Russian invasion of India.

Once I had arrived in Central Asia everybody, from the highest to the lowest, was most helpful. But my difficulty had been to reach my goal. Armed with a permit from the military authorities in St. Petersburg I had proceeded in the first instance to Tiflis, the capital of the Caucasus.

The mere fact of my being permitted to set out for Russian Central Asia caused me to make a note on the 3rd/15th of September, 1894, that "I do hope the permission accorded to me will make the Indian Government less ridiculously terrified about Russian moves in Asia". For I was going to see all their military secrets, which would most certainly not have been the case if anything sinister had been in contemplation.

At Tiflis I made the acquaintance of the Governor-General, General Sheremetiev, a member of one of the greatest Russian families and his family. They were, as usual, charming. He was surprised that the rule had been waived in my favour, but very pleased nevertheless. My next stage was from Tiflis by train to the great oil port of Baku on the Caspian

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sea. Port Said used to be considered as about the hottest bed of iniquity in the world. But Baku, so I was assured by residents there, must have run it pretty close, although, of course, Baku had not the international atmosphere of the Egyptian port. At any rate, one could, I was informed in more than one quarter, hire an assassin for one rouble, say about a florin, while, if the intended crime should have some peculiar and difficult features about it, the price might be as high as two roubles. There was nobody in Baku whom I desired to have murdered.

Everything had gone off excellently so far. But now comes the difference between the old imperial and the new Soviet systems. In order to reach Asia it was necessary for me to go by steamer from Baku to Uzunada, without calling at Krasnovodsk, which was the terminus on the Caspian of the Transcaspian railway, which in those days only ran as far as Samarkand, celebrated owing to Tamerlane.

The shipping company could not sell me a ticket unless the port admiral, Sablin, should authorize it to do so. Indeed, a clerk informed me that only a second-class cabin would in any case be available, as I had struck a bad patch. The Emir of Bokhara and his suite had engaged all the first-class accommodation. I had overlooked the port admiral, whose

THE ADMIRAL'S WIFE

command consisted of a couple of tiny gun-boats, because his existence had been hitherto unknown to me.

Hastening to repair the omission, for my ship was due to sail early on that same afternoon, I wended my way to pay my respects and to solicit a permit. He was not helpful. In vain I produced my permit from the military authorities in St. Petersburg. He knew nothing about them—I had other occasions to notice this friction between the military and naval authorities in imperial Russia—and as nobody had informed him of my impending journey he could not sanction a passage without reference to St. Petersburg, which would take some time, and, of course, cause me very considerable inconvenience.

There seemed to be nothing else to do than to kick my heels in Baku for an indefinite time, for I was well aware of how dilatory officialdom in Russia—as well as in India—could be. But again my good goddess, Chance, appeared. She was in the form of the admiral's wife, a very charming lady. When she was told of my predicament she immediately, in my presence, ordered her husband to telephone himself at once to the shipping company for a second-class berth! He surrendered immediately as all good husbands should. I may

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mention parenthetically that the Finnish-Swedish captain of the vessel gave me one of the Emir's cabins, explaining in a rather off-hand manner to his Highness that a first-class cabin had been ordered to be kept for me by the admiral. The Emir, I was told, was of no account until he should reach his own domains. He just had to take his chance along with the other passengers who crowded the ship.

When in the U.S.S.R. in 1934 there were no impediments placed in my way by anybody when my papers were in order.

A good deal resulted from the first Five Years' Plan, although the standard then set proved to be considerably too high, as already mentioned in a previous chapter. The Second Five Years' Plan is likely to show further progress, for much experience, positive and negative, was gained during the first term. To take a specific case of the tremendous difficulties confronting the Soviet Government. The footwear in the U.S.S.R. is according to the standard of the boot shops, which cater chiefly for our own poor, of apparently very indifferent quality. It is also, like almost everything else, decidedly expensive. Foreign boots and shoes could be imported and the people properly shod, especially the children, at a remarkably low cost. Why doesn't the Soviet do this, many foreigners

A DILEMMA

ask? The difficulty is that to do this would, of course, mean exporting large sums in foreign currency when so many vital needs, even in hospitals, have to be considered. It is not that the Soviet Government prefers shoddy and expensive goods to cheap and good ones. The question of finance is all important, for the Soviet means to improve its credit position and take no risks. In fact, it has already done this in the space of three or four years, as instanced in the rate of interest on Government bonds having been reduced from around 10 per cent to 7 per cent.

It would be foolish to attempt to estimate even approximately the length of time which it must take to arrive at only a real and cheap sufficiency for every deserving person, old and young. The number of persons actually seen by me in the U.S.S.R. in the year 1934 over great distances, as we consider distance, must have run into hundreds of thousands in different parts of the country. They were all poor, with a few exceptions such as Ira, a very lucky girl, as we consider poverty. Communists were better off, but then they have to work really hard to maintain their superiority. The women, especially the younger ones, in the towns, as in the case of our own people belonging to our weekly wage-earning section of the

SECRET TREATIES

community, copied the fashions for wealthy persons in, however, cheap materials. This showed, it seems to me, a proper pride which was not in imperial days visible among those people.

I have occasionally glanced at some of the impressions written down or spoken by tourists who visited the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and, as far as I could make out, those tourists appear to have gone to Russia with a preconceived idea, possibly, nay probably a subconscious one, which was either in favour of or opposed to the Soviet system. I do not say the Soviet methods, because they would not be tolerated by our people, even if they should appear to be necessary. For my part I wished to compare the new with the old, a comparison which these tourists could not do, for they had never known Russia previously. In comparing the new with the old Russia it is, of course, essential to remember always—what so many people forget—that the Soviet Government has had only about fifteen years in which to begin to develop its grandiose plans. This in a land covering one-sixth of the earth's surface, with little ready money for a considerable time and less credit. I make no apology for this repetition. My only wish is to try to present a true sketch, without boring statistics, of both sides of the picture.

CHAPTER XV

“CHURCH TOO STRONG FOR ME”

Orthodox Church—Pobedonostsev—“Church too strong for me”
—Example of Bureaucracy—Pre-war Education—Fairy Tales—A
Village School—Hell—A Miracle—Superstition—Illiteracy—
Foreign Office Suppresses Report—Priests in U.S.S.R.—Mar-
riage Laws—Output of Books—The Town and Country Child
—“Factory” Schools—Opportunities in U.S.S.R.—Obstacles to
Progress—Anti-religious Museum—The Third International—
Questions by Wireless

I SHALL recount my experiences at Lenin-grad later. It is convenient now to say something about education in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. In order to refresh the reader's memory it may be repeated that in imperial Russia the Greek Orthodox Church was supreme. As a general rule, under the Emperor Alexander III, it was necessary, in order to fill high posts, for a man to belong to that Church. There were, of course, exceptions. For many years the Chief of that autocrat's Military Household—and Alexander III was truly an autocrat—the late General Richter, a native of the Baltic Provinces and German by descent, was a Lutheran. But

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Alexander III knew a really capable man when he met him. Nevertheless, the general rule was as has just been stated. Pobedonostsev, the Procurator of the Holy Synod, was practically supreme. If he wished to hunt anybody that man was done for, as regards his career at any rate. Pobedonostsev was a very slim, withered, ascetic-looking individual, with a dead-white shrunken countenance when I first saw him in the closing years of the nineteenth century. He would willingly have burnt at the stake any heretic for the good of the heretic's soul. But he was a truly religious man according to his lights. There were two classes of clergy in the old Russia. One class was permitted to marry. These men formed the provincial clergy, while the other priests were celibates.

It has already been mentioned that when the Emperor Nicholas had wished to introduce a sound system of elementary education into his dominions on two occasions before the World War broke out, his Majesty told me, in answer to my inquiry why he had never done so, that “The Church was too strong for me”. He added that he had wished to “get rid of those ridiculous fairy tales”. The priesthood realized, and especially Pobedonostsev and other Procurators, who were not,

BUREAUCRATIC AUTOCRACY

it should be noted, priests themselves, that education, even if very elementary, was likely in time to lead to results fatal for the autocracy.

For many years before the War the word bureaucracy would have been a better appellation than autocracy. The labour of governing had, of course, increased so prodigiously as time passed that no human being could have coped single-handed with it. Here is an instance. Military Attachés of Great Powers at the military courts of St. Petersburg and Berlin were especially favoured in some respects. Among other advantages they were allowed Customs facilities denied to members of an ambassador's staff. In imperial Russia this was done by means of a book credit of 1,000 gold roubles at a time. When this was exhausted—I once as a bachelor imported a perambulator, but *not* for myself—I asked for a new credit. This had to go to the Tsar for his Majesty to initial it!

To return to the subject of education.

There was, of course, a certain amount of education for the masses for years before 1914. But it was extremely elementary, and there was no obligation for parents to send their children to school. Most of them did not do so, because they wanted them for work as soon as they were old enough to perform some. Numbers

“CHURCH TOO STRONG FOR ME”

of mothers in England and other countries would act similarly if there were no compulsion. Such children as did attend school in the villages—and the peasantry, it may be repeated, formed the overwhelming mass of the population—received a very elementary training. The most important part of it was church fairy tales. Those who never went to any school—the vast majority, in fact, of the whole—heard the fairy tales from their parents, who themselves were extraordinarily superstitious, owing to their upbringing.

One day when at Mogilov, in the year 1916, I looked in at a village school. A church story was being told. It related to a poor old woman, Martha by name, who had been lying at the point of death. She was anxious about her future in another world. Her village priest was as usual drawn from some poor family. No doubt some, possibly many of the provincial clergy, felt that they were called by some higher Power to serve God. But undoubtedly a very large proportion used the Church as a means of livelihood. In many cases they were, according to what villagers themselves said, debauched persons and given to drunkenness.

Poor old Martha had spent most of her savings on, as she had believed, clearing her

MARTHA AND THE PRIEST

path to Heaven. The millions and millions of tapers bought by all classes of Russians formed a very large part of the priests' incomes. At last, however, Martha believed that her way was clear when the priest discovered that an unexpected obstacle, as he declared, would prevent her from reaching her goal unless she should purchase the happy eternal life by means of more of her little savings. She was much upset about this, for she had hoped to leave something behind her for her family. But the priest made it clear that duty to God came first. Unless she should act accordingly she was doomed to everlasting torment hereafter.

I once heard a very eloquent French village curé describe in detail in an Easter sermon what everlasting torment means. He was most dramatic and, in his own case, I am sure believed every word of what he said about a loving and merciful God! There must be large numbers of English people, who honestly are convinced that an unbaptized child, perhaps a few hours old, is doomed to everlasting hell fire. Three old cathedral ladies once told me what a "wicked little boy" I had been when, in order not to be tactless, I had kissed a little silver image in the hand of a French bishop at the Lycée de Versailles when all my catholic companions had done so.

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But with a backward and extremely superstitious people like the Russians the power of the Greek Orthodox Church was supreme and that Church, as in the case of other Churches, meant to retain its power as long as possible, very naturally. The story of my friend when about to start on a bear hunt is typical; but perhaps another story, relating to the belief inherent in the highest circles in Russia, may illustrate what the Greek Orthodox Church really meant in that country better than anything else. The education problem is intimately connected with the religious question.

In the days of the Empire I mentioned one day to a very charming girl of my acquaintance, whose father, although of Baltic Province descent, professed the Orthodox creed, and who held one of the most important posts in St. Petersburg close to the Tsar, that I was about to pay a visit to Moscow. She was very highly educated, and spoke and wrote fluently and correctly five languages.

She asked me whether I would do her a favour while in the ancient capital, and, of course, I was only too glad to be of service. Curiously enough, her name was also the affectionate diminutive Nadya. It appeared that a young gallant of the cavalry of the Guard had captured her affections some time

THE MIRACULOUS OIL

previously. Latterly, however, he had decidedly cooled off, and had transferred his love to another rival. My little friend told me that there was on sale at the celebrated Iberian shrine in Moscow a very special brand of oil. If a few drops of it were rubbed on the head, I was told behind the left ear, any wish would be granted. Would I, if possible, procure for my friend a tiny phial of the miraculous liquid? Of course, I promised to fulfil the request. But, she said, she was rather uneasy. The oil was so rare and so precious that she feared the priest in charge might refuse to sell to a heretic.

I was not so sceptical, having heard a good deal about the priests, and the event proved me to have judged rightly. There was a continuous stream of mostly poor people passing the shrine, when I visited it. As my clothes were much superior the priest naturally charged me a fancy price of five roubles, about ten shillings, for a very small phial. While waiting my turn I had seen that the purchasers procured about the same quantity as was sold to me for a matter of kopecs, that is to say farthings.

In due course I returned to St. Petersburg with the precious oil and handed it over to Nadya, whose eyes sparkled with gratitude. I can see them now, and lovely eyes they were.

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Some time afterwards I inquired how matters were progressing and was informed that at last everything was going on as it should. The gallant had jilted the rival and was ardent in his professions of adoration for my little friend, who, although extremely charming, nay fascinating, was not actually so lovely as Number Two. Things continued in this favourable manner and eventually the pair were married, and lived quite happily together—for some time, at any rate. Nadya remained convinced that it was the miraculous oil which had done the trick. But I had set my own Intelligence Department in motion. It informed me that just about the time that I had left St. Petersburg for Moscow the gallant had discovered that my friend's dowry would be much larger than that of her rival. He was heavily in debt and wanted to marry not merely a good-looker, but also real money.

When people like my Nadya were brought up in this manner it is not in the least astonishing that the masses of the people, especially the vastly largest class, namely, the peasantry, should have lived in dread of the power of the Church. The priests had a moral stranglehold on them. This is perhaps the chief reason why Russia had so many churches in excess of her needs. Moscow with its “forty times

PRE-WAR ILLITERACY

forty" places of worship was typical. When travelling by road in imperial Russia I soon learned that the correct thing to do, when approaching a strange town, was to ask the driver, if he belonged to those parts, how many churches the place possessed. Its importance would be gauged accordingly.

A people brought up on church tales, like that one about Martha, and which was totally illiterate to the extent of at least 65 per cent of the population—some Russians used to put the figure as high as 85 per cent, which, I think, was too high—could not be expected to be energetic or indeed anything but lazy. The men, in the villages especially, had literally no other resource except drink. The Greek Orthodox Church was, of course, well aware of this, and the village priests frequently set the example. Early marriages in these circumstances simply increased the destitution of the Russians.

When the Bolsheviks came into real power, backed as they were by the overwhelming mass of the population, they recognized—had indeed long ago recognized—the evil moral effect produced by the State Church. It was promptly abolished as such with the entire concurrence of the great majority. True, the valuables were confiscated on behalf of the needs of the State. The French had done exactly the same

“CHURCH TOO STRONG FOR ME”

thing during their great Revolution, when they despoiled the monastic institutions of their valuables for the common good.

Some readers may remember the outcry in both of our Houses of Parliament, and in the Press, serious as well as popular, about the persecution of the Greek Orthodox Church in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics after the Labour Government came into office in the year 1929. The pressure put upon Mr. Arthur Henderson, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, was so great that he undertook to call for a report on the subject from his Majesty's Ambassador in Moscow, although the Church question was a purely domestic concern of the Soviet Government. I remember many cases where parishioners, who were not members of our Established Church, were refused burial in a graveyard or at best were allowed to be interred only in a specified and unconsecrated spot. Our good and earnest people would have been greatly incensed if, for instance, the German Government had protested against such cruelty to surviving relations.

The report was furnished in due course, but has never been divulged, no doubt because it does not substantiate the accusations levelled against the Soviet Government. What hap-

MARRIAGE LAW

pened was, as I knew before I visited the U.S.S.R. in 1934, that the inhabitants themselves decided what churches to retain and which of them should be put to other uses. I have already stated elsewhere in this volume that I saw priests going about their sacred work without even Red soldiers paying the slightest attention to them. If a sufficient number of people wish to have a church and a priest they are at liberty to have their desire gratified. People may be married in church, but, as in France, there must be a civil function in order to legalize matters.

It is not necessary to label Bolsheviki who do not attend divine service, or who do not believe in it, as atheists. Although some people call themselves atheists, they do not really understand what they are talking about. Atheism means self-existence, and this is something which the human brain cannot grasp. There is some religious instinct in everybody, crude it may be, but there it is, for every individual must of necessity recognize that there is some inscrutable Power which the Universe manifests to all of us, and this undoubtedly must give rise to some instinct which may best be described as religious. If the priests in the U.S.S.R. pay attention to their proper duties and do not attempt to meddle

“CHURCH TOO STRONG FOR ME”

in politics nobody there will interfere with them.

I have dwelt at some length on this highly important matter of the position of the Greek Orthodox Church in imperial and the new Russia because, as will, I think, be granted, it hampered education when it had the power to do so. The situation to-day is vastly different. The Soviet Government attaches the greatest importance to education. Illiteracy survives in relatively only a few instances. But the young *must* be educated.

This does not mean that children of fifteen are to consider their education closed, as is the case in England still, sad to say. The Bolsheviks look upon this elementary schooling as merely the preliminary to higher education. The masses of cheap, well-printed books on all kinds of subjects, technical and other, on sale in the towns, whether they are visited by tourists or not, is astonishing. And the sales appear to be prodigious, so far as I could judge from what came under my personal observation. Education until fifteen is even already compulsory. Of course, it is directed also to teaching the advantages of the Soviet system as opposed to that in force in so-called capitalist countries. This was only to be expected, just as the schoolbooks in United

DEARTH OF SKILLED WORKERS

States' seminaries taught the duplicity and hypocrisy of England.

The dearth of skilled workers in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics has already been mentioned. The Soviet Government aims at remedying this want as rapidly as possible. But when the children have attained the age of fifteen years a distinction must be drawn between the town boy and the country one. After finishing the elementary schooling a town boy will select his future profession. It may, for example, be medicine, surgery, or mechanics.

He will then go to a "Factory" school, as it is termed, until he reaches the age of eighteen. Let us assume that a youngster, male or female, wishes to become a mechanic. During this course of training after he has left the elementary establishment he will be taught the rudiments of his trade, the tools which he should select for any particular job, and *the care* of these tools, which has always been a great stumbling-block in the Russian path. Readers may remember the story of the Scottish marine engineer and the Black Sea battleship.

At the age of eighteen he will enter a factory as an ordinary workman, and then his future rests with himself. If he is ambitious and anxious to go on to higher-paid posts, with increasing responsibility attached to them, every

“CHURCH TOO STRONG FOR ME”

opportunity will be afforded to him to improve his technical acquirements by attending other schools free of expense. As regards opportunity it seems probable that in no country outside the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics are there so many chances offered to those who wish to get on in the world. It will undoubtedly take a very long time for the U.S.S.R. to procure a sufficient supply of skilled workers even supposing that there were no weak vessels, and that every young person was filled with ambition.

There is no blind alley, as in western nations, for the young, and cannot possibly be for many a long day to come. Incentives are, therefore, ready to hand. Everybody is assured of employment during his or her working life. The dread notice of unemployment or even of short time cannot touch these boys and girls and older people, as has been the case with such devastating effects in other countries. The contrast between our army of two million unemployed with great numbers of other human beings dependent on them is most striking. But, of course, the situation in our own land is tremendously aggravated by the density of the population. Herein the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics has, of course, an immense advantage over us.

CHOICE OF A CAREER

When a boy or a girl has been in a factory school for some time after leaving the elementary school the idea may enter their heads that they are unsuited for the profession which they had originally selected or they may want a change. Owing to the broad level of education it is possible for an adolescent to change his mind and enter another technical place of instruction. But there should not be too long a delay in making up one's mind, for by the time that a youngster is approaching the age when the factory proper will take him on, it may be too late for him to select another career unless the boy or girl is prepared to take some risk. Girls, it may be mentioned, are accepted in factories as with us; some are employed in what is perhaps the most highly skilled work, namely, that of gear cutting. To be at a loose end in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is a very serious thing. But there is work for all. To put it briefly a youth will probably be wise to select a career before the age of eighteen years.

The town boy has, however, a great advantage over the naturally more lethargic country lad or girl. In the latter case there has been no preliminary training between the ages of fifteen and eighteen, and this is undoubtedly a severe handicap. This fact is, of course, well

“CHURCH TOO STRONG FOR ME”

known to the Soviet authorities and factory officials. I have heard them talk about it. Their general conclusion was that the town youngster is, as one would anticipate, quicker to learn and to understand, for example, the reason why tools and machinery must be taken care of if they are to continue to give good service. As a general rule those officials whom I have quoted are satisfied with the progress of, say, the budding mechanic, who, when he enters an ordinary factory, will know more or less what to do.

The country lad is different—girls are said to be quicker than boys—for time means little or nothing to him, nor does he for some time, I was told, understand why it is necessary to look after tools and machinery. Moreover, in view of the general shortage of labour, especially of skilled labour, in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, it is not desired to draw large numbers of the young from agricultural districts. They are wanted on the land, and even though there is this shortage of labour the towns are so greatly overcrowded, pending the construction of new dwellings, that the authorities have been compelled to restrict the influx of fresh numbers. Town life in Russia, as in other more advanced countries, attracts the young, for it is brighter than the drab country existence on the prairies.

STEADY PROGRESS

If all young Russians, or even a majority of them, were trained and should take advantage of their opportunities, then the industrial competition of the U.S.S.R. in the markets of the world would be, as already stated, very difficult to meet. But racial characteristics are, as the Soviet authorities know full well and have told me, a severe hindrance to rapid development. The driving power of the Communists is, however, there, and is applied with full force without ceasing. Certainly substantial results have already been obtained, and things are to-day in a very different state to what they were when the first Five Years' Plan was begun in October, 1928. It was pretty generally derided. The visions of to-day are often the facts of to-morrow.

It should be always borne in mind that besides the difficulties in the path of progress inherent in the Russian temperament the Soviet Government has still to reckon with evilly-disposed persons. These older people either resent the new system or else they may also be incited to cause serious damage to machinery by the agents of foreign Powers. In December, 1934, a flagrant case of outside interference was abundantly proved by unchallengeable documentary evidence.

But, as we all know, no great plan is ever

“CHURCH TOO STRONG FOR ME”

carried out without serious hitches, and the goods which the U.S.S.R. must require before it can effectively compete in the world's industrial markets, offer our manufacturers glorious opportunities for profitable trade for many years to come.

It is, of course, evident that the Greek Orthodox Church has still much influence among older Russians. The *ikons* in peasants' and other workers' dwellings are evidence of this. The materialistic Soviet Government has no objection to this influence provided the priests do not meddle in political affairs. There is an anti-religious museum in Moscow which I visited. The name is, I think, scarcely a suitable one, for there is nothing there which I saw to lead one to believe that the Soviet authorities wish to stamp out all religious feeling. The exhibits are intended to show the evolution of the world from the earliest known times, and how gradually this has come to pass. But the Soviet Government does not, for example, believe that in the event of war Almighty God will intervene to humble the U.S.S.R., just because it is what may truthfully be termed irreligious. All Christian nations invoke the God of Battles; but surely this is taking too much for granted?

The educational facilities in the Union of

RELIGIOUS INSTINCTS

Soviet Socialist Republics, which are open to everybody without exception, do indeed, in my opinion, put us to shame with all our wealth and boasted longing for the progress of this great kingdom. The Greek Orthodox Church undoubtedly encouraged illiteracy. If it had wished to see a people with at least a sound elementary education this could have easily been brought to pass, because the Church was supreme. One could not have a parade without the army chaplains first sanctifying the proceedings with holy water. The struggle between that Church and education has been definitely settled in favour of the latter.

My own belief is that every human being has some kind of religious instinct. A man may, and some Bolsheviks, perhaps all, call themselves atheists. But Atheism is self-existence, that is to say, existence without a beginning. Obviously no human mind can possibly conceive such a state. The corollary is that there are no atheists. From all that we know the great Professor Huxley was a truly religious man, for he laboured all his life to benefit others. But he did not belong to any Church, for Dogma repelled him. Those of us who do not belong to the Church of Rome think some of her doctrine wrong, and vice versa. What the Soviet Government has

“CHURCH TOO STRONG FOR ME”

been fighting is the subordination of the human mind to Dogma which cannot always be right, or else there would be only one Christian Church instead of several in Europe and numbers in the United States. Anybody, Jew or Gentile, is at perfect liberty to profess any religion he chooses in the U.S.S.R.; but, in order to propound his belief, he must not introduce political activities.

There is a very useful method, it seems to me, which is employed by the Soviet Government to further not only education as generally understood, but to induce the Russians to think for themselves, namely by means of Wireless. To digress for a moment it should be explained that broadcasts in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics are, of course, under government control. The *Komintern*, representing the Third International of world workers, is so closely affiliated to the Soviet Government that its propaganda must obviously be approved by the latter. From time to time foreign Governments have raised the question of *Komintern* subversive propaganda in their own countries.

It has been officially denied that this was done by the orders of the Soviet Government, and this was literally the truth. But, as Soviet officials have told me, the *Komintern* being the soul of the Soviet executive, Bolshevism and

TEACHING BY WIRELESS

propaganda are indissoluble. As a matter of fact the amount of propaganda put forth by broadcasts is extremely great.

There must be now a very large number of wireless centres in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, perhaps some hundreds; but the territory is so vast. At stated intervals, to resume the question of broadcasts as an educational factor, a series of questions are put, usually not more than five at one time, on subjects likely to appeal to the mass of the people. Those questions, which I have listened to, were eminently sensible ones. Answers are invited from listeners who are interested, and the correct replies are broadcast on fixed dates. This is a step in advance of the lessons given by wireless in other countries, and I was told, when in Russia in the year 1934, that the number of answers sent in was very encouraging and growing. The idea is, at any rate, a very laudable one. To teach people to think for themselves, especially about matters which directly affect their daily lives, must be better for them than lapping down as gospel what their favourite newspaper tells them. "I saw it in print, so it must be true." I have often heard this remark.

CHAPTER XVI

FATHER WAITS ON SON

Louis XIV Peevish—Drunkenness and Damage—Old Haunts—Father waits on Son—A Bad Egg—Rasputin's murder—Funerals—Overcrowding—Pre-war Accommodation—Housing Difficulties in U.S.S.R.—Are the People better off—A Changed Aspect—A Sad Visit—A Religious Lady—Relics of the Past—Financial Transactions—Lotteries—A Digression—When is a Lottery not a Lottery

AFTER my return from Moscow to Leningrad my time was my own, as I had only to await the date of sailing of my ship for London. I naturally wished to visit some of my old haunts. I did not go inside the Winter Palace or the Hermitage, my intention being rather to see some of the palaces and houses of old friends of imperial days.

One thing about them struck me as redounding to the everlasting credit of the revolutionaries, especially the wilder spirits among them. That was the extraordinarily little damage which had been done. I confess, when the Revolution broke out in March, 1917, I had thought that all or nearly all those stately residences, with their almost priceless collections of every kind

LITTLE DAMAGE IN 1917

of valuables, would have been razed to the ground. Louis the Fourteenth was displeased with the Count Bentinck of the day whose castle at Amerongen he had commandeered for his own use. The Count was at the time representing his own country at Berlin and thought it wiser not to obey the Sun King's command to return and act as host to his Majesty. Louis, therefore, promptly had the castle burnt to the ground, only one of the four corner towers being left standing more or less in ruins.

There must have been a terrible amount of drunkenness in Leningrad when the Revolution occurred. The fact remains that remarkably little damage was done, although for a considerable time the populace was freed from all restraint. Several of the more important buildings were turned into museums, together with their contents. They are on view to the general public at stated hours. I looked over one house where I was a guest as often as I chose to walk in, even uninvited, for dinner or luncheon. This was Russian hospitality. It is still reflected, so I was told by some Russians, themselves in great poverty, even by at least some Communists. The Russian is by nature hospitable.

Another house which I visited had been occupied by one of the greatest families in Europe, or at least by its Russian branch. Its

FATHER WAITS ON SON

ancestors had ruled Lithuania, then a great country, before the Romanov dynasty was heard of almost, at any rate before Russia became a great consolidated Power. The residence had been emptied of its valuables and had been turned into an ante-natal clinic and maternity home for workers' wives and daughters. I saw several of them come for advice and medicines, but did not ask to go over the building. The staff were very helpful and kind; nothing official about them. Tourists were not taken there, I was told. Several other residences, where I had been in days gone by, had also been transformed into something useful.

I was particularly anxious to see the house of one magnate who escaped from Russia and has been dead for several years, but whose children, who were alive at the time of the Revolution, are still living. The family were among the Tsar's guests at the Coronation in Moscow in the year 1896. I was then already acquainted with it, but not intimately. It so happened that, after my return to St. Petersburg after the celebrations, I was for some reason invited to pay them a visit to their residence on one of the islands of the metropolis. The owner had other residences in other parts of Russia, but preferred to live in this particular

HOSPITALITY IN IMPERIAL RUSSIA

one for practically all the year except when he went abroad.

I had expected to stay for three or perhaps four days. But somehow time passed, and delightfully, for many months! The island itself belonged to my friend, and was largely residential, and therefore a very profitable property. Numbers of people lived on the various islands, and there were also the gypsy and other night-life entertainments for all and sundry. Everything was at my disposal, horses, carriages, servants, and, of course, the best of everything as regards board and lodging. It was a truly delightful time for me, as may well be imagined.

The English nurse always lunched with the family, whether there were other guests present or not. One day a gentleman came to luncheon. He was a man of about forty years of age, in the uniform of an official of superior standing. He was a very pleasant, cultured man. He sat on the right-hand side of my hostess, and the old major-domo, who had been born and bred in the magnate's family, was, as usual, serving the various wines. Later on, after the visitor had departed, my hostess asked me what my impression concerning him had been. It was a very agreeable one. It then appeared that he was the son of the major-domo, who had

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been proud to see his son get on so well in the world as to be the honoured guest of such a great family. He was equally proud to wait upon him.

Mention of this particular family tempts me to relate a little story concerning it about something which occurred before I was a guest staying in the house. It had always been most difficult, usually impossible, to procure fresh eggs for my breakfast unless they could be obtained from Finland, where the supply unfortunately was small. I had mentioned this fact once, soon after my arrival in St. Petersburg in the year 1893. My hospitable hostess replied that they were careful to keep their own poultry yard and I must come soon again to luncheon when I should have all the eggs I wanted.

Shortly afterwards I took advantage of the hospitable offer. Presently a dish of eggs, poached, was presented to me. I was not greedy, and began by placing a couple on my plate. To my horror the first mouthful was—well, awful! I could not possibly go on with the remainder. Now, Russians are so hospitable that they usually watched to see if one were enjoying the food placed before guests. My hostess's eye saw the eggs lying on my plate and remarked that I was eating

RASPUTIN KILLED

nothing. I concocted some sort of a lie on the spot, and it held good, for it never occurred to the mistress of the establishment that there could be anything wrong with eggs from her own hens. I remember that I felt, however, obliged to go hungry for the remainder of the meal in order to bear out my falsehood. The eggs had been fresh enough, but the hens' food had made them tasty.

It was a long drive from the formerly named English Quay on the banks of the glorious Neva, where several Grand Ducal palaces and other houses, almost palaces, were situated, to the island which I wished to go to. One had to cross some bridges, for the Neva has more than one stream. My driver took the route over which I had passed so often in former days. Crossing one bridge I suddenly remembered that it was the one over which the murdered Rasputin's body had been cast after he had been assassinated by Prince Felix Yousoupov, whose mother had been the greatest heiress in Russia, and was a very charming lady.

It was a very curious fact for most people that the sandwiches, well spread with cyanide of potassium, a most deadly poison, did not seem to affect the monk. He ate them greedily. The truth was that the poison had been kept for so long somewhere, probably in a chemist's

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shop, without being required that it had lost its potency, and no doubt Rasputin had a strong digestion.

It was the merest accident that his corpse was ever discovered. The strength of the current in the Neva is so great that the splendid river could never freeze, any more than Lake Baikal could freeze, if it were not that it becomes blocked by large ice-floes. These come down from Lake Ladoga and make the river one solid mass with ice to a depth of several feet. It is, therefore, necessary to cut holes in it at various points in order that water may be drawn. Yousouпов selected one of these holes. But at that particular spot the ice was evidently thicker than usual, and so the whole of the body was not submerged.

Part of one arm and its hand remained caught by the upper part of the block of ice and this, of course, led to the discovery of what had been done. If the ice had been a little thinner Rasputin would have been swept out to the Gulf of Finland and thence to sea and most probably would never have been found. Another curious fact is that just before these lines were being written I made the acquaintance, by the merest accident, in London of Rasputin's daughter. She is a very pleasant and extremely good-looking lady, who had been working at

FUNERALS IN U.S.S.R.

the Royal Agricultural Hall in London with performing tigers. There is no doubt about her nerve! She has two very handsome children, of whom the elder is fourteen years old, whereas their mother does not look a day more than twenty-five or so.

I eventually reached the island in Leningrad of which I was in search. It looked much the same as in imperial days until my car approached nearer to my friends' house. We had passed something, which had not existed in former days, on my way. This was sports grounds for adults and children, and the courts for lawn tennis were well patronized. This was in the forenoon. It happened to be a "Day Out". On my way to the island I had passed a couple of funerals. One was accompanied by a priest of the Greek Orthodox Church and the mourners were walking bare-headed behind the coffin. Nobody among the crowd in the street took the slightest notice of the procession. The other funeral was a good Bolshevik one. There was no priest, and the mourners kept their head-gear on and were chatting among themselves; but the coffin was covered with flowers. The loud speakers in that region seemed to be particularly strident rather than bellowing.

At about a quarter of a mile from the entrance gates to the grounds of my friend's house my

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chauffeur had to stop, for the road was cut up and encumbered with building materials for workers' tenement blocks. These are not the only buildings of the kind in Leningrad. I had been told that tourists are taken to see some in the main city, or rather on its outskirts, as being something exceptionally luxurious. But in this respect numerous other cities have some excellent flats, and the tourist ones could not, I am sure, have been more suitable or convenient for the tenants.

The overcrowding in Leningrad is very awkward. In imperial days, however, there was a great deal of it not only in the hovel dwellings—those near the Neva were often full of water and inhabitants drowned when the river was in flood—but in private residences of the highest class. We should bear this in mind when considering the situation to-day, with the huge influx from the country into the towns, for the purpose of this volume is to compare fairly the new system and its working with the old imperial one.

When I was Military Attaché in St. Petersburg during the closing years of the last century my apartment was in one of the very best houses in a purely residential street, the Sergievskaya, next door to the Austrian Embassy. When I went to look at the apartment, during

OVERCROWDING IN PRE-WAR RUSSIA

my "flat" hunt, I found the tenants, members of the distinguished Rodzianko family, at their midday meal. Russians did not mind this intrusion at inconvenient hours. On being shown over the various rooms, and taking into consideration the size of the family, it was to me astonishing how the family themselves could find sufficient sleeping accommodation. They were, in fact, giving up the apartment owing to a recent increase in the family. I took the rooms and, although I was a bachelor at the time, I had only one spare one.

The accommodation for the domestic staff in high-class houses—and consequently for servants in less exalted establishments—was in proportion; it was extraordinarily cramped. The reception rooms would leave nothing to be desired for convenience of entertaining on the scale to which imperial St. Petersburg was accustomed, that is to say it was truly lavish. But domestics frequently slept in reception rooms or in passages. The British Embassy, which belonged to the great princely house of Soltykov, was very badly off for bedroom accommodation not only for servants, but also for the quality.

One great difficulty in Leningrad and elsewhere has been rearranging the reception rooms—and many of them were of great size—so

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as to house families. These large spaces have been partitioned off, in order to accommodate several families according to the cubic space. Even if, on the new scale authorized for each individual, there should be no overcrowding, as regards the official scale for space for each individual, there would remain two highly inconvenient factors, especially in view of the great importance which the Soviet Government rightly attaches to hygiene. These are the water supply and lavatory accommodation. The present tenants must share one kitchen, which may well have been, in former days, barely large enough for its purpose, with perhaps—indeed usually—several families. Moreover, in imperial Russia the lavatory accommodation in very good houses was what we should have considered very many years further back extremely scanty and bad. The flow of water, when it was not a dry closet outside a dining-room, was usually very inadequate. But nobody complained. There were, of course, exceptions. For example, in the house in which I spent so many delightful months everything was as perfect as English plumbing could make it. But at the same time and in the same year the lavatory arrangements in a new great hotel in Moscow left very much to be desired.

Bearing all these factors in mind one can

HOUSING DIFFICULTIES TO-DAY

appreciate the urge which the Soviet Government has given to new housing accommodation not only in the show cities, but also in towns off the beaten track, like Mogilov for example. My companion, Nadya Kaplinskaya, was old enough to remember pre-war days. She had lived then in a very comfortable apartment with her people. Now she is married with no children and occupies with her husband one room in a good street, which I used often to visit, but she has to share the kitchen and the lavatory accommodation besides the water supply which had always been reduced to a minimum.

After all, people usually wish to have their meals at about the same hour, and the other inconveniences make matters worse. Nevertheless, my conviction is that Nadya prefers the present system with all its dreadfully uncomfortable surroundings to a reversion to the old one, because of the benefits which are being conferred on, as I believe, the vast majority of the population, slowly no doubt, but some are plainly visible and improvements are being steadily effected.

It may be urged that Nadya was bound to express the opinion to me which she did, as she is a servant of the Soviet Government. But she was not the only Russian woman whom

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I questioned on the same subject. Some of them are not in Nadya's official position, and some would prefer to revert to the old system. But the majority, a tiny fraction, it is true, of the female population of the U.S.S.R., held the same view as Madame Kaplinskaya. I believe honestly so. It is, I submit, not so difficult to discern when people are speaking the truth, when one has met great numbers of them, some being more than acquaintances. I have not wished to conceal the dark side of the picture, and the views of persons who detest the Soviet régime have been faithfully recorded. To repeat, my view is that while there is terrible suffering in a number of cases the overwhelming mass of the population is better off, and its standard of life is gradually improving. Certainly it has not receded, and people get meat now more often in one year than they would have done in several.

These reflections occurred to me when my car to the island of my friend had to stop because the road was blocked. What was really almost a small town itself came into view on one side of the road. Some enormous blocks of workers' flats had been constructed, larger than those which I had seen in other cities. It may be, of course, that in the places which I had visited there may have been a block or blocks as large

A TRANSFORMATION

as those which now presented themselves to my gaze. I did not enter any of them, for the arrangements were already known to me. Other new blocks were under construction. In former days there had been a large number of dwellings of an inferior type situated where these tenement blocks had been built. These old habitations had been demolished to make room for the new ones.

Proceeding on foot to the main gate of the small park which encompassed my friend's house, which, as was so often the case, is built of wood, I paused on entering the grounds. It may be mentioned that these wooden houses, not uncommon also in Germany, are very stoutly built of the best really seasoned timber. The walls are thick and the houses extremely warm in winter. It always astonished me that so few ever caught fire.

A small dwelling-house of three or four rooms within a couple of minutes' walk from the main residence had been pulled down. The large wooden block of stables and coach-houses had also been demolished ; but the place generally, outside the main residence, was quite neatly kept. Some small new buildings had been erected for, I believe, the staff employed in the former, which was turned some years back, so an informant told me, into a technical school for students.

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Nobody asked me my business when I entered the big house, nor when I was roaming all over it. Indeed, while I was in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics the only occasion when I was stopped was at Moscow when endeavouring to leave the *Narkomindel* (Ministry for Foreign Affairs). Quite a number of people, however, had questioned me, when I was talking to them at railway stations or in the streets, about my occupation in life. I invariably made a point of mentioning my post with the Tsar before and during the World War, and nobody ever turned away in disgust or gave me a sour glance.

It was, of course, very sad for me, with my Celtic temperament, to wander through the rooms I had known so intimately, or, rather, to go inside them and look round. In the drawing-room, dining-room, and other parts of the house, including the principal bedrooms, there were classes of young men, with a few girls, of the average student's age, undergoing instruction in various subjects. They were all busily occupied in taking notes of the lectures, but nobody took the slightest notice of me. My companion, Nadya, whom I had taken with me as she was anxious to see a place so well known to me and which she would not herself have been acquainted with in imperial Russia,

WHAT OTHER STANDARD IS THERE?

was greatly interested. Undoubtedly every opportunity is, it may be once again repeated, given to those in the U.S.S.R. who desire to improve their knowledge and get on to posts which, if they do not bring material wealth, raise those who possess it above their fellows, although there is, of course, no distinction of "class" as in western lands. Some time ago I was talking to a very good and earnest English lady, who happens also to be wealthy. She really does a great deal of good to those less fortunately supplied with this world's goods than she herself is. In consequence of some remark, I said :

"But you measure everything by a money standard."

"Well," she replied, "what other standard is there?"

Old customs, especially if they have been pecuniarily profitable ones, die hard. It was really pathetic to see the more elderly of the *Suisses*, or hall-porters, still occupying in some cases their old positions. In hotels, of course, they paid very large sums for the privilege of their lucrative posts. In private houses they were always tipped handsomely. Nowadays a tip must be exceedingly rare. One could see what they felt when one was leaving an hotel or restaurant. Still, one man's meat—the man

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in this case being the private individual—is often another man's poison.

After rambling round my friend's domain—the house was sadly in need of a coat of paint—I returned to the mainland by another route. This took me past the old Bourse, or Stock Exchange, which in old days was at certain hours a very busy place. Now, of course, all dealings in stocks and shares, and speculation, are no more. All financial transactions, such as the buying and selling of Government bonds and lottery tickets, are carried out by the State Bank and its subsidiaries. I have met a good many people in this and other countries who have come to the conclusion that the Soviet Government is right in stopping Stock Exchange transactions as we understand the term. Either the buyer or the seller must, for the time being, suffer a loss. It may, of course, later be handsomely recovered and perhaps a very big profit made.

But even the cleverest amongst us cannot always be right, and one object of the Soviet Government is the prevention of speculation. With the ever-increasing ramifications of trade and industry the number of limited liability companies in England is constantly increasing. Many of them are, as we know, as near the line of swindling without actually overstepping it

LOTTERIES

as possible ; or else numbers of promoters are too optimistic. The result is the same for hundreds of thousands, if not for millions, of ignorant and confiding shareholders.

On the other hand, the Government of the U.S.S.R. undoubtedly encourages by every means investment in lotteries, which our legislators, if not our people, regard as the worst form of gambling. It is a matter of opinion. After all, one invests as a rule only a comparative trifle in a lottery for the chance of winning a large sum, or at any rate a sum larger than the original investment. Moreover, State lotteries frequently pay a fixed rate of interest on lottery loans until the tickets are either redeemed by drawings or a prize is won. What the objection to this course can be is beyond my comprehension. The method is surely preferable to ordinary stock exchange transactions, for such lottery tickets must be paid off some time at par and so benefit oneself or our descendants.

I am coming to the point—after one more digression. I do try hard, but in vain, to rid myself of the detestable habit of introducing irrelevant matter. I once was paid the very great compliment of having something which I had written reviewed by Mr. "Punch". But the reviewer, who was indeed most kind

FATHER WAITS ON SON

to my literary baby, noticed my failing and said in effect that, if I should wish, for example, to describe a journey from London to Southampton I would set about the task in the following manner:—

I would first go as far, say, as Woking and thence to Liverpool, where I would embark for Calcutta. Then after a trip to Australia I would return via Hamburg and Berlin to Harwich, go on to Iraq, back to Aberdeen, thence to Woking and finally get to Southampton. A very, very thin "red thread" would run through my wanderings. Well, on this occasion, instead of making for Southampton, I wish to say that, although our few remaining liberties in this country, where the ordinary daily life of the harmless citizen is concerned, are being more and more curtailed or taken away altogether, those who wish to win some money, perhaps a small sum, possibly a really large one, can now set about doing so in a perfectly legal manner, thanks to the Soviet Government!

There is absolutely nothing in the scheme, except that it was invented by the Bolsheviks, which could in the slightest degree hurt even the strictest nonconformist conscience. Dissenters may, therefore, back a certain winner without feeling guilty of any lapse from their usual high moral standard. There is now, in

EVERY TICKET WINS

the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, a paradox which may best be explained by the question :

“ When is a lottery not a lottery ? ”

The obvious answer, and the correct one, is when a holder of a ticket *cannot* lose, but, on the contrary, *must* win something, small or large ! I dare not, in view of legislation passed soon before these pages were being written, enlarge further on this attractive subject, for I wish, if possible, to avoid spending part of my short remaining span in jail for attempting to corrupt fellow-citizens.

The Soviet Government does not, of course, guarantee an immediate win. But the duration of the lottery loan before redemption is relatively short, so that prizes cannot be long deferred. In a few years at the outside every holder will have got his or her money back and at least something more to boot, perhaps a great deal.

CHAPTER XVII

THE HIGHER JUDICIARY

Petty Session—The Higher Judiciary—Cheques in Russia—Suspicion—Favouritism—"Jobs" in England—Pre-war Revolutionists—Stalin's Salary—Peculators Shot—League of Nations—A Bolshevik Betrothal—Espionage—"Who is it?"—Life is Hard—Bribing Imperial Customs

I DID not attend any sittings of the Courts of summary jurisdiction while I was in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Their legal net is, however, far larger than that of our Petty Sessions, for these Courts in the U.S.S.R. have jurisdiction within their respective districts over all criminal and civil cases, with, of course, the exception of those which are expressly reserved for the jurisdiction of other Courts. These summary Courts are termed *The People's Courts*. The president is a trained magistrate. He can act alone or in conjunction with two assessors, said to be chosen from workers at random, who, however, I was given to understand, have no legal qualifications. In this they resemble the great majority of our unpaid magistrates, of whom most, so far as my ex-

CHEAPNESS OF RUSSIAN LAW

perience as a Justice of the Peace goes, regard the Justices' Clerk as the final arbiter, perhaps wisely so. From what I could gather by inquiry the decisions of the People's Courts may be fair enough. But one cannot forget that the existing circumstances in the U.S.S.R. offer very great temptations to an interested president. Human nature is human nature.

I have no experience of the higher courts nor of the political judiciary. From what I heard from various sources, which seemed to be reliable, there is room for great improvement as regards the administration of justice in the U.S.S.R., especially where political offences or charges of peculation are concerned. From my knowledge of the Russian character I am strongly inclined to accept this view. In the first place the change from imperialism and autocracy to the new proletarianism was—indeed, with a backward and superstitious people like the Russians had to be—catastrophically sudden. But law in Russia does take into account helpful factors which our system excludes, and its cheapness makes it open to all.

The Russian was and is, in matters of business and law, suspicious. In imperial days the use of the cheque was far less common than even in France, where to this day there is no clearing house in our sense of the term. In

THE HIGHER JUDICIARY

pre-war Russia cheques were good for only five days, and as they were "open" cheques the temptation to theft, to say nothing of *bona-fide* losses in transit, was very great. In those days, therefore, merchants paid great sums as well as trifling ones in cash. Russians when travelling habitually carried on their persons very large amounts in cash, usually bank-notes.

When the Bolsheviks seized the reins of power suspicion of one's neighbour was certain to increase, if this were possible, instead of diminishing. Then, corruption and peculation, even in the highest places, were commonplaces in autocratic Russia. These failings were not likely to be quickly eradicated from the masses of the poor, if the chance should present itself. Favouritism is a general human failing also to be taken into account. A scarcity of highly trained legal minds also made itself felt, for the *intelligentsia* had been ruthlessly submerged and destroyed to a very great extent. Individuals from a less well-educated and trained section of the community were, often at least, certain to have the faults of their former superiors to a perhaps more marked extent.

This was, of course, to be expected. Even in our own country the London County Council chiefs felt obliged, towards the end of

REVOLUTIONARY STUDENTS

the year 1934, to issue a sharp reminder that members of the Council must abstain from favouritism and "jobs". It is to be hoped that this will bear fruit. Poor old Tom Mann was prosecuted for his alleged sanguinary revolutionary projects. But he was not at all likely to have raised a following strong enough to subvert our methods. Without such a following he was powerless; otherwise paper laws would not prevent a catastrophe. I am not criticizing our authorities, who ordered his prosecution. They felt honestly compelled, undoubtedly, to act as they did in the common interests of the nation, and nobody can blame them.

Years ago, during the closing period of the nineteenth century, I knew several revolutionary Russian students when I was Military Attaché in St. Petersburg. They had sought me out, of course. It was interesting to talk to them in order to discover their points of view. The substance of our conversations was, when I told them Russia was not then fitted for a constitution in our sense of the term, that they were aware of the fact. But, they said, they had been highly educated at one of the universities and did not desire to return to the homes, usually peasant ones, from which they had come.

The number of vacancies for any kind of

THE HIGHER JUDICIARY

employment, preferably in the public service, of course, was so limited that their only chance of improving their condition was, they believed, by means of a revolution. One of them told me: "We want a share of the spoils." He was alluding to the notorious corruption in high places and low ones. This was intelligible enough where the lower class of civil servant was concerned. Whereas his English colleague in a similar post would be getting about £200 a year the Russian would be drawing somewhere about £30. He had to dress respectably and live decently, so that even a bachelor had no option but to indulge in peculation to the best of his ability.

At the same time, I have never heard anybody accuse Stalin, the practical Dictator of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, of corruption. His salary is about £300 a year and he has, of course, free lodging and means of transport. But it is well known that he lives in the simplest manner, as does his family. Hitler goes further and takes no salary from the State at all. He lives on the proceeds of his books, a means of subsistence which Stalin does not possess. Bitter political enemies of Hitler have often told me this.

Moreover, in all the circumstances it is not surprising that the higher judiciary, especially

CHECKS ON PECULATION

the political branch of it, should be in need of reform. But when an official, even a Communist one, is detected in peculation, he is promptly shot. I dare say there would be more corruption in boroughs and elsewhere in England if it were not for the incorruptible British Press. Moreover, it is a well-known fact that, in spite of polite words and the unanimous invitation to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to join the League of Nations on a perfectly equal footing with other countries—instead of, as is usual, waiting for the Soviet Government to make the request—there is still a lot of underground manœuvring going on by some foreign Powers. I do not believe that the Soviet authorities are deliberately cruel; but they certainly are very drastic and, I submit, in the circumstances, they have to be. Not that I am in favour of unfair methods. I hope that in time these will be eradicated from all countries.

There is, however, a brighter side to Soviet law where even a *bourgeois* is concerned, as the following true story will show. The *bourgeoise* in this instance was—indeed, still is, I am glad to say—the daughter of a celebrated family, lovely and charming; she was wealthy in her own right. When the Revolution broke out she was serving with a Russian Red Cross unit,

THE HIGHER JUDICIARY

and remained in that position after the Bolsheviks had secured control. Although they were anti-aristocratic they did not turn away useful workers of the kind. After a time, however, my friend, who was becoming worn out with her ceaseless labours for so long a period, felt a longing to leave Russia and get a thorough change abroad.

This was difficulty number one. It was perhaps almost the most difficult thing in the world to be able to quit the territory of the U.S.S.R. This is, indeed, still the case. Apart from the fact that the Soviet Government did not wish to lose citizens by emigration it was likely that emigrants would help foreign Powers in their counter-revolutionary projects. Another factor was, and still is, that emigrants might come to believe, from what they would observe in a foreign land, that Communism—as was at that time attempted to be practised—was decidedly inferior in material comforts to the “capitalist” system.

My friend was at a loss to know what to do. At last she consulted a friendly Bolshevik doctor. Her people, it should be mentioned, had left the country before the Revolution, so that she had no near relation capable of serving as a hostage. The doctor told her she must apply for leave of absence to go abroad as she

SYMPATHETIC BOLSHEVIKS

was suffering from incipient appendicitis and could, in the circumstances, be treated more easily in another country than in her own. He did not wish to appear in the case officially.

She then sent in an application for the required permit, stating the grounds for the request. Presently she was summoned to appear before a Bolshevik committee of laymen! She was asked, in accordance with the Russian custom—indeed, a general habit on the Continent on the part of the authorities—innumerable questions on all kinds of subjects. Many of them, as usual, had nothing to do with the case. At last one of the committee inquired, unfortunately, where she felt the pain. She felt that she was lost, for she had omitted to inquire from her medical friend in which part of the body the appendix is situated. Inwardly trembling she made a guess and pointed to a spot which happened to be the wrong one. By great good luck all the members of the committee were equally ignorant, and she received permission to go abroad. She told me they were really so sympathetic.

This was all very satisfactory as far as it went. But another apparently insurmountable obstacle remained to confront her. She had no money, nor any means of getting any. Her beautiful jewels and a good deal of money were in one of

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the banks, where they had been deposited for safety before the Revolution. As all banks were now nationalized nothing could be withdrawn without official permission, which would certainly not be granted in this case.

My friend felt desperate and inquired from other friendly Bolsheviks whether they could suggest any means by which she could secure the necessary means for her journey. Once out of the U.S.S.R. she would be all right, for she had wealthy relations in Germany and England, so that she could take her choice. But her inquiries showed her a way out of her difficulty. Although the foreign and anti-Bolshevik Press frequently declared that all women were nationalized along with everything else, human and inanimate, the truth was that marriage was encouraged by the Soviet Government. Parenthetically it is curious how some newspapers often publish what their foreign correspondents must know to be untrue. Führer Hitler affords a case in point. Even to-day some foreign correspondents cable that he is always surrounded by a strong escort in order to protect him from assassination, whereas the truth is that he goes about quite unprotected, except that a staff officer of rank accompanies him, just like our own gracious Sovereign and King Edward.

The way out for my young friend was simple.

A TROUSSEAU

If she should declare her betrothal to a Bolshevik she would be entitled to receive a lump sum in cash for the purpose of acquiring her trousseau. Note, please, the *announcement* of betrothal. The name of the *fiancé* was not required, nor, of course, the marriage ceremony, for the trousseau had first to be provided. No fixed amount for this had been laid down, and so a friendly lady Bolshevik assisted my friend to draw up the list of necessaries. Curiously enough, among the articles, which were specifically authorized, was a man's dressing-gown—one would have thought this was an unnecessary luxury—and a pair of men's slippers! The list was a comprehensive one, as it was wiser to ask for more than one expected to get. The list sent in to the proper quarter was for a sum of about 6,000 roubles. This was, of course, cut down, but the lady received a sum which was sufficient to enable her to reach Germany. All was, therefore, well, and she did not return to her native land.

The "thin red thread" of this little story leads to the subject of suspicion, and espionage on one's neighbour, or even near relation. I have already pointed that the Russians were, generally speaking, of a suspicious nature during the days of autocracy. This trait, being inherent in their nature, was not likely to be

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diminished in strength when the Bolsheviks came into power. The great number of counter-revolutionaries at that time alone tended to increase rather than diminish the force of the trait. It is there to-day and will probably remain a characteristic of the race, possibly, as time passes, to a lesser extent. I do not know.

My point is that many foreign observers, who have not had the advantage of knowing the old Russia and her ways, either notice this particular characteristic, or else they are told of it. One can quite understand that, if a stranger asks a question which, if truthfully answered, might get the other person into trouble if he or she should be overheard, the answer is likely to be at least evasive. For the probability is that the questioner has had to put his inquiry through an interpreter, and interpreters are not always above suspicion; sometimes because they are not good interpreters.

I do not for a moment dispute the fact that espionage exists in a strong measure to-day. In the circumstances it is, I submit, inevitable that this should be the case. But my point is that it was there equally during the former régime, but is now probably more widespread. To infer, however, that espionage, or sneaking, as we should call it, is something new, born from the Soviet system, is certainly entirely

ESPIONAGE

wrong. I know of so many instances myself, which occurred during the days of imperial Russia, that I am convinced—other sources would indeed confirm my statement—that espionage is nothing new, and never has been. The Soviet Government is not the only one which encourages this sort of thing.

In that most interesting book, *My Second Country*, by Mr. Robert Dell, a specific instance is recorded in which the late M. Clemenceau, before the World War broke out, had to confess, when challenged, that he had, as Minister, made use of *agents provocateurs*, in connexion with labour troubles at home. I do not think that anything is to be gained by painting a political picture darker than it really is. There are many things about the Soviet methods, which would not be tolerated by our people. Whether they are all suitable for the Russians time alone can show. The alleged betrothal of my friend shows that the Bolsheviks did not then understand Woman.

English persons are naturally inclined to think that what they believe to be right is the best course to follow. But they also draw the line at anything of which they strongly disapprove. The position of the Greek Orthodox priests in the U.S.S.R. to-day has been faithfully described. Our churchmen, if any of

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them should happen to read these pages, may not believe me. They may feel that I am not deliberately lying, but think also that I have been somehow hoodwinked in that land of remarkable surprises. The unexpected was to be found in imperial as well as in Soviet Russia. In the Communion Service of the Established Church in this country is expressed the devout hope that it may one day recover the power which a Church had at one time, namely, of applying in full force its ancient disciplinary strength. It might be a good thing; I do not know; but our people would not allow this to happen.

In imperial Russia the police, acting under the orders of a Minister of the Interior, what we should term a Home Secretary, on many occasions arrested people in the middle of the night and they were sent to Siberia and vanished, possibly for ever. This is no fancy tale. I was one day, during the closing years of the nineteenth century, in the company of some Russian ladies, members of the very exclusive St. Petersburg big world. The conversation happened to turn upon a rumour that an important official had betrayed his trust; had, in fact, sold secrets to a foreign Power. From this the conversation drifted to the question of the Russian Secret Police. One lady said

SECRET POLICE IN IMPERIAL RUSSIA

she did not think its tentacles were so widespread as many people thought. In reply a young girl, not then twenty years of age, ridiculed this statement and asked: "How do any of us here know which of us is a member of the Secret Police?" Nobody could, or at any rate would, supply the answer.

No doubt there is favouritism and peculation in the U.S.S.R. to-day, just as there is in every other country. Russians told me so during my visit in 1934. It would, indeed, be surprising if there were not, considering that life is hard for everybody and must remain so until the system is more fully developed. It is intended to make the U.S.S.R. practically independent, in course of time, of foreign manufactures and raw materials, and self-sufficing. All raw materials, except perhaps rubber, are there, and this will surely be supplied somehow or other. But, in order to continue the comparison between the old and the new Russia, let me quote a case in point, premising that, whereas an official caught in peculation or corruption to-day is likely to be executed, or at least to undergo a very hard and long sentence, in imperial days an official, who betrayed his trust in financial matters, was seldom likely to suffer very severely, unless he had enemies who had the ear of the police and judiciary.

THE HIGHER JUDICIARY

A great friend of mine was returning to St. Petersburg from the Coronation at Moscow in the year 1896. She was the young wife of an enormously wealthy man, also an intimate friend of mine. He was also truly generous. His cigars were of great size and were specially manufactured for him in Havana. My visits to their house were frequent, and I usually had a couple of handfuls of the finest cigars in the world forced upon me. I always accepted them. I asked a leading London cigar merchant once why cigars of that quality were not obtainable in this country at any price. He replied that the very pick of the supply of cigars went to Russia and the next best grade, a very good one, came to London.

Well, this friend of mine was telling me of a disaster which had affected her wardrobe. It may be mentioned that she spent a great many thousands of pounds every year on costumes from the then leading dressmaker in Paris, Paquin. On the return journey from Moscow during a very heavy thunderstorm the rain flooded the baggage wagon where her trunks were stored. One of the dresses, which had cost her about £4,000 in Paris, she told me, was completely ruined and nothing was insured. Now, this same lady, and others of her standing, habitually bribed the Customs authorities at

BRIBERY IN IMPERIAL RUSSIA

Wirballen in order that imports should be free of duty. Yet money was absolutely no object, to my friend at any rate. Ladies concerned had themselves told me of this practice, which meant, of course, that the money lost in this manner to the Russian Revenue Department had to be found by increasing the taxes on humbler mortals.

With such examples, it would not be so surprising that poor Russians, when they get the chance to-day, should endeavour to emulate their former superiors. My own impression is, judging from what I could gather in conversation when in the U.S.S.R., that peculation is now the exception rather than the rule. No doubt the terrific penalties meted out when malpractices are discovered have something to do with the purer financial atmosphere. But some things in Soviet Russia, which are distasteful to our ideas, have been inherited, in my opinion, from the old system, whereas the present one is based upon public ownership of the means of production.

CHAPTER XVIII

TRANSPORT IN U.S.S.R.

A False Communist—Human Nature beats Lenin—Freedom of the Individual—All Governments Socialist—Railways Ousted Coaches—Motor Transport—Obstacle to Trade—Women's Heavy Work—A Vigilance Committee—Road Communications—Russian Mud—Aviation—Morals—Divorce then and now—Too many Husbands—Nationalization of Women—Offences against Women—Effect of Marriage Laws—Maternal Affection Weakened—Abortion—Shortage of Drugs and Medicines—Theatres—The Ballet—Lazy Peasantry—Large Farms v. Small Holdings—Russia full of Surprises—Old Customs Die Hard—Socialism and/or Individualism

THIS chapter contains some final remarks. The word Communism naturally alarms people. But it has already been pointed out that Communism is no longer practised, or, rather, attempted to be practised in the U.S.S.R., for the overpowering reason that Russian human nature, as elsewhere, is repugnant to it. There is the story of an English very small capitalist discussing the question with another Englishman who professed Communism.

The former inquired whether, if his companion should possess two cows, he would be prepared to give up one for the common

PIECE-WORK SYSTEM

good. The reply was in the affirmative. Would he, if he owned two horses, release one in the same manner? Certainly he would. If he should happen to possess two pigs would he put one into the common, or, shall we say, collective stock?

“You scoundrel,” was the answer, “you know that I’ve got two pigs!”

Lenin, as already pointed out, endeavoured to introduce pure Communism, but he soon realized that the overwhelming mass of the population, the peasantry, would have none of it in spite of military expeditions. The U.S.S.R. is now, and has been for some years, on a piece-work basis, capitalist in a sense if not in name. Of course the Russians were the last people, owing to their temperament, in which to try to inculcate Marxism. Marxism may be the catchword; but there is something different to-day in the U.S.S.R. The mystical Russian cannot yet assimilate it. Communal ownership he can.

What struck me among many other things of interest in Russia was the freedom of the individual in his ordinary, daily life. Provided he does not express openly a desire to upset the present system and does not interfere with others, he can do what he likes. He can drink, or buy chocolate—if there is any and if he has

TRANSPORT IN U.S.S.R.

the cash—at any hour of the day or night. He can buy a lottery ticket, and in fact do a number of things which are forbidden to our steady-going people, who seem to put up patiently with ever-increasing inroads on their little liberties. Indeed, it may happen that we shall all have, in time, to pay for a licence before we shall be allowed to breathe.

There is one point of resemblance at least between the Soviet Government and our own, not necessarily the present British Government, but any Government. The former has reduced to a fine art the method of controlling trade. We are subsidizing, from the pockets of the general taxpayers, shipping, farming, sugar—all kinds of things, in fact. We may call it what we like, but it is Socialism, if shapeless.

Not so many years ago, when railways ousted the stage-coaches, the proprietors of the latter, who had sunk large sums in their undertakings, received no compensation. To-day the railways are being compensated substantially owing to the restrictions placed upon the owners of the new mechanical form of transport on the roads. A man may not now, after obtaining a licence for his lorry, haul goods to any point of the kingdom which he may wish to do for the purpose of his business. He will be restricted to hauling for a distance of, perhaps,

WOMEN'S HEAVY WORK

twenty-five or thirty miles. Obviously this must throw a lot of fresh traffic on to the railways, because it would be too costly and impracticable generally for goods to be transferred after short runs to other lorries. This is not written in a carping spirit. We have our splendid railways, and the hundreds of thousands of men employed by them directly or indirectly, whose interests as members of the community must be considered.

One great obstacle to development of trade has always existed in the old and the new Russia. More so to-day, in my opinion, than formerly, because of the rapid expansion in all branches of industry. The new railway mileage constructed before the World War was relatively small because of the huge extent of territory. Moreover, the new lines were constructed not with a view to trade, but for strategic purposes usually, with a view to a possible war. The Soviet Government is doing all in its power to remedy this defect. Much more would have been already accomplished if it had not been for the careless nature of the average Russian, especially he who is drawn from the country districts. It should be mentioned that the women in the U.S.S.R. work very hard; they do heavy work as well as lighter tasks and are, I am inclined to think,

TRANSPORT IN U.S.S.R.

more energetic than the male sex. But output and repair of locomotives, for example, have been far below what ought to have been done. The official newspapers do not hesitate to criticize the shortcomings of heads of departments for having failed to insist on the proper output. But the latter have the Russian temperament to reckon with.

Sometimes there is also speculation and not merely laziness or carelessness. I read some time ago in the official *Pravda* about a scandal in a Leningrad co-operative shop patronized by workers. The store had the various goods and provisions which were asked for. But fats, for example, could not be taken away unless the purchasers should have brought their own containers, because there was, the manager declared, no packing materials in the establishment. After a time, however, the discontent grew to such a pitch that a Vigilance Committee set itself up. On inspecting the basement of the store, any amount of packing materials of various kinds were discovered. The manager had been selling them at fancy prices for his own benefit, and had either cooked his accounts, or else he had written the things off his books as having been destroyed by accident. But he paid with his life as soon as his crime was discovered.

RAIL AND ROAD MILEAGE

With the exception of Russia's one metalled highway her roads were, and are no doubt still, to a large extent, what the Americans term "dirt" roads. This is all very well in the dry season. But during rainy weather and after the thawing of the snow in the spring, matters are very different. In important towns, like, for example, Ryazan, the roads become full of mud-holes in the spring. Some of them are not ordinary holes, but pits of liquid mud, perhaps several feet in depth. There is nothing on the surface to show where these death-traps are situated. I have seen a man with his horse and cart suddenly disappear in one of them. They were suffocated in the mud bath before help could reach them.

Remembering that the U.S.S.R. covers about one-sixth of the earth's surface, and allowing for the fact that its railways had increased in mileage since the World War by 11,000 miles to 46,000 miles in the first year of the first Five Years' Plan, it will be realized that the railway communications in Russia must, for a very considerable time, fall far short of her requirements. The Soviet Government is speeding up construction as fast as possible.

When the first Five Years' Plan was inaugurated there were only 600,000 miles of highways, of which about 24,000 miles were cobble-stones,

TRANSPORT IN U.S.S.R.

except, of course, the Georgian road. During the first Five Years' Plan it was hoped to construct 600,000 miles of "hard surface" highways suitable for motor transport. The estimates in this respect, as in others, were, however, based on too high a scale. But the Government is doing its best and has more resources to-day than five years ago. In these days of mechanical transport, so indispensable in a land poorly provided with railways, the dry dirt road is unsatisfactory.

But, given adequate means of transport, Russian sloth and carelessness must still be reckoned with. The official newspapers have frequently denounced these faults, and have published detailed accounts of goods, consigned, for example, to the south, being dispatched perhaps in the opposite direction. Truly, a nation takes a long time to unlearn custom, and in the U.S.S.R. there are about two hundred different nationalities. Russians comprise about one-half, and the Ukrainians about one-fifth of the total population.

The vast distances in the U.S.S.R. are one reason, possibly the principal one, why the Soviet Government pays such great attention to the development of aviation. The Russians certainly are wonderful in this direction, as all the world knows. The U.S.S.R. Customs

M O R A L S

tariff is, generally speaking, unscalable. But aircraft and their parts may be introduced free of duty, or could have been up to a very short time ago. Possibly, to-day, the industry is on a sufficiently developed footing to have allowed this concession to foreign manufacturers to be rescinded, unless, of course, they establish factories in the territory of the U.S.S.R. with the sanction of the Government.

The question of morals is a highly important one. In imperial Russia the average factory or peasant girl was, I believe, more frequently than not, on the way to have a baby before her lover married her. This is, as we know, a not uncommon situation in this country. When I set up my own establishment in St. Petersburg, towards the end of the year 1893, one of my maids was very capable and obliging, and she was also an exceedingly nice-looking girl. I was not very observant in these matters; but one day I noticed what must shortly happen. My attention had been attracted really because she had asked for a few days' leave, which was unusual. Noticing her condition, I thought it best that she should go through her troubles elsewhere than in my apartment, and remarked that she had evidently been very naughty.

"Well," she replied, "I don't see it. They all do the same."

TRANSPORT IN U.S.S.R.

The infant was put out to nurse, and the mother returned to her duties shortly afterwards until she and her lover were able to get a joint situation in a far more important establishment than mine.

Another female member of my small domestic staff was also nice-looking and capable; but she became rather too flighty, and I one day gave her the usual three days' notice. A few weeks afterwards I did what was for me a most unusual thing. I went into the back regions for some reason which I forget. Something about the other servants attracted my attention. My visit had been, of course, entirely unexpected. At any rate my suspicions were aroused and I opened the door of a large cupboard which stood in the passage just outside the kitchen door. There were the dismissed maid and her lover, who was, I knew, in the service of a magnate's family in St. Petersburg. They were both rather shamefaced and indeed rather alarmed, being aware that they might get into very serious trouble, if the police should be informed. I could not help laughing. No doubt this was setting a very bad example, but Mrs. Grundy was not even in those distant days of much account in the Russian capital. The pair had been frequently together in my apartment, so they told me, and as the inevitable

DIVORCE

baby was well on its way they intended to be married shortly afterwards. This duly came to pass, and the bride was also taken into the employ of the magnate's household, with which I was very well acquainted. My domestic adventures—I was a bachelor at the time—amused my Russian friends ; or rather I should say the adventures of my domestic staff. Of course, one should not attempt to generalize from one or two particulars ; but what I heard from many sources, high and low, confirmed what I have said about sexual morals.

Divorce was a very difficult thing to obtain in imperial Russia. The Greek Orthodox Church set its face against it as a rule. Of course, there were exceptions. For example, the late Grand Duke Paul Alexandrovich, brother of the Emperor Alexander III, had an aide-de-camp, Captain Pistolkhors. He was an officer in what corresponded to our Household Cavalry ; but it may be remarked parenthetically that he regarded the horse " as the worst enemy of man ! " He had a remarkably handsome wife, from whom he was eventually divorced, and she married the Grand Duke. Later she was granted the title of Princess Palei and lives now in Paris. For the common herd divorce was practically impossible.

I shall not venture to compare the Russian

TRANSPORT IN U.S.S.R.

morals of to-day with those which obtained under the empire. Doctors differ, and this is literally true where sexual morality is concerned. The marriage laws are very simple; people may be, and sometimes, I know, are, married in a church. But, as already stated in another chapter, the union, to be legally effective, must be made in a register office. Divorce is equally simple. A couple may have been married for only a few days or less and find they are unsuited to each other. All they have to do is to go to the official concerned and get their divorce registered out of hand.

In the early days of the Soviet régime divorces were, I was informed, almost as common as marriage. But, now, opinions vary. It is said on good authority that monogamy is more prevalent to-day than was formerly the case. I cannot say. The women under Soviet rule have a very good reason for wishing to get married, for this gives them certain legal rights. The children are also protected. It has been mentioned elsewhere in these pages that the Communist teachers of the nation themselves had to learn the harsh lessons of experience, and this was the case in the marriage laws as originally laid down, so I was told.

There were very many divorces. Some

ALLEGED NATIONALIZATION OF WOMEN

women would have a number of husbands in a short period of time. What was to be done about the children? It would not always have been possible to decide for certain which particular husband was the father. The Soviet regulations ordained, therefore, that all the husbands, perhaps half a dozen or even more, should be jointly responsible for the offspring. In time it was found that this system did not work well. The idea had been partly due to the fact that one of the husbands, possibly the real father, might have vanished to another region, and somebody, it was held, ought to be responsible. The matter has for some time past been revised so that the law of parentage is practically the same as with us.

The alleged nationalization of women by order of the Soviet Government was at one time a favourite stunt of some newspapers. At first, and indeed for admittedly a long time, bands of destitute children roamed about the country. They were amazingly adept in every kind of vice, especially sexual vice. The Soviet Government, however, did everything in its power to stamp out this sort of thing, although once a boy or girl of fourteen or so is already a confirmed criminal its moral nature is not likely to change for the better, and it could not become worse. But segregation might, and

TRANSPORT IN U.S.S.R.

in many cases did, prevent them from corrupting others of their own age. The situation to-day is, and has been for some years, that a woman may use her body in any way she chooses. But criminal assaults on a woman subject the perpetrators to a tremendously heavy penalty.

In the chapter dealing with my visit to a children's crèche in Kiev the question was raised whether the fact that mothers, with very few exceptions, have to work—and work hard—are likely to lose their influence over their children, or care less for them. I would not venture to offer an opinion. But inquiry among Russians leads me to believe that this is at least probable. The happy relations of husband and wife do not appear to have suffered from the Bolshevik marriage and divorce laws. Indeed, the contrary is said to be the case. Certainly in old days the drunkenness of the men, or at any rate the sums which they spent on liquor, hit the women very hard. To-day the improvement is unchallenged. As regards the children, however, it would not be surprising if the affection of parents, especially of mothers, for their offspring should be diminishing in the circumstances which have been described in these pages.

Those women who for various reasons do not wish to have children are treated in the

HOSPITAL REQUIREMENTS

hospitals, and there are, I was told, a good many cases of the kind. At the same time, as the population is undoubtedly increasing very rapidly in the U.S.S.R., it is evident that the great majority of Russian women prefer to have children born to them.

Mention of hospitals reminds me that there is admittedly a serious shortage of certain drugs and medicaments. The reason is that the import of materials for them would cost what are, in view of the relatively scanty financial resources of the U.S.S.R., large sums of money which are required at present for more pressing needs. In Kiev, for example, I had a prescription properly made up. I wished to have it repeated when in Moscow, but no pharmacy there had the most important ingredient of all, nor, later, in Leningrad. I had to wait until my return to England.

As regards Art in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics I am not competent to judge. I did not sit through a theatrical performance, because the pieces which happened to be on were melodramatic and did not attract me. But the theatres are, as already stated, very well patronized. The ballet is kept up quite in the old style as regards technique, although the decorations in Leningrad and Moscow are decidedly tarnished, I was informed. The cost

TRANSPORT IN U.S.S.R.

of attending a performance of the ballet in Leningrad, including a car there and back, is about ten shillings in our money.

It will be readily understood that the chief difficulty which confronted the Soviet Government, after the Civil War and the Allied Intervention had come to an end, was the conservative and lazy peasantry. But this obstacle is being overcome, and undoubted progress is being made. Opinions differ, of course, as to whether great Collective—or State—Farms are preferable to small individual ownership. My view is, not being a farmer, that large farms with the best seeds, good advice, and machinery must be a great advance on the old system, especially in view of the slothful Russian temperament. One cannot, of course, judge from what one reads sometimes in foreign newspapers. Before I went to the U.S.S.R. in the year 1934 I had read reports in an influential American journal of a serious famine in the very district which I subsequently visited. There was not a word of truth in the statement.

Russia is such a vast field that there is no end to what could be written about her. She holds so many surprises, and, of course, there are exceptions to every rule. For example, it has been shown what importance the Soviet

THE SOVIET PRINCIPLE

Government attaches to cleanliness and hygiene, and what attracted my notice very agreeably in these respects. But old customs, it may be repeated, die hard. In some of the low-class tenement apartments in old Kiev, which I looked at, it was evident that the tenants had not changed their original habits. It would, indeed, have been surprising if all the older people should have done this. Their hovels had always, in imperial Russia, been filthy and crawling with vermin. On the other hand, in public places the improvements effected by the Bolsheviks were astonishingly marked. But they are tremendously handicapped by being forced to incur enormous expenditure on armaments instead of on development.

Bearing always in mind the stupendous difficulties which the Soviet Government has had to contend with, it really surprises me that so much—if relatively little—has been accomplished in about fifteen years. Will all our slums have been cleared away in that period of time?

The Soviet Government aims at equilibrium between production and consumption. It has the potential resources for this purpose and its *principle*—I do not say its methods in our case—is undoubtedly a Christian one, namely, that every deserving person shall have a suf-

TRANSPORT IN U.S.S.R.

ficiency before anybody else has more than he needs. This ideal is still a long way from realization. Meanwhile the U.S.S.R. is the most striking example, and paradox, of Socialism AND Individualism, and not Socialism OR Individualism.

Equilibrium between production and consumption means, of course, that necessities of life, especially foodstuffs, shall not be wantonly destroyed when great numbers of persons are hungry, but cannot afford to fill their wants. Besides this kind of equilibrium, a vast export trade is being developed. In many other lands, on the contrary, we see the exact opposite of this. Their export trade is contracting and home consumption is far outstripped by productive capacity. What is the explanation?

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