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*THE TRUTH ABOUT MOSCOW*

THE TRUTH ABOUT  
MOSCOW

AS SEEN BY A FRENCH VISITOR

*by* Henri Béraud

*translated from the French by*

John Peile, M.A.



LONDON

Faber and Gwyer

*First published in mcmxxvi by Faber and Gwyer  
Limited, 24, Russell Square, London  
Made and printed in Great Britain  
by John Wright and Sons  
Ltd., Bristol*

## *TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION.*

It was in no spirit of antipathy to Soviet doctrines or with a settled conviction that no intercourse with the Russian Government was possible that, some twelve months ago, Henri Béraud set out on the visit of which he here relates his experience. Himself a baker's son and working for a living since his boyhood, he is in sympathies, ideas and outlook a true son of the people, taught to look the whole world in the face and never to feel shame for his lowly origin. His intelligence inclined him to dismiss as exaggerated much of the talk of the peril of Communism, to view with optimism the future economic stability of the New Russia. The Counsellor of the Soviet Embassy in Paris, Béraud tells us, expressed strong conviction that his account on his return from Russia would be uniformly favourable. It was possibly a long time since he had dealt

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with any but 'official' reporters. Monsieur Mouthon, for whose paper, the *Journal*, Béraud was travelling as Special Correspondent and who subsequently published his articles, seems to have expected a sympathetic report. On his arrival threats and abuse were showered upon the intrepid reporter, who trusted the evidence of his own eyes and common sense rather than the sights to be seen on a pre-arranged tour and the conventional explanations. The rudeness of his hosts Béraud returned by an unruffled courtesy, their persistence in emphasizing the enviable conditions of their own working classes by the contention that, though indeed far better than in 1914, such conditions are immeasurably lower than any working man or woman in the west would tolerate, and their claim to have bestowed upon the proletariat the blessings of 'economic equality' by recording the indisputable fact that the 'people' are living in utter poverty under the heel of insolent politicians and low-born profiteers.

*TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION* vii

The author deliberately omits from his work theories, statistics and even comments. It is a 'round, unvarnished tale' that he delivers, in all truth and sincerity, in moods grave or humorous as the incidents require. Though addressed directly to the working class from which he sprang, his message will appeal to a far wider range of readers. Its lesson will be found in the words which Béraud quotes from Lamennais' impassioned speech to his countrymen, spoken nearly a century ago :

'Whoever steals and plunders, attacks the poor as well as the rich. Do not drink from the cup of crime, for in its dregs is the bitterness of misery, anguish and death.'

J. P.

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# THE TRUTH ABOUT MOSCOW

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## CHAPTER I

### *THE FIRST STAGE*

A journey to Russia starts from the Rue de Grenelle ; of all the lines it is the one with the longest stopping place. If you are lucky or tactful you may get off after a month there.

Towards the end of June, I hailed a taxi and without giving any other address, said, ' To the Soviet Embassy.'

The man started off at the speed of one who understands. Is there in the whole of Paris a single chauffeur who does not know where Monsieur Krassin lives ? No, probably because all the taxi men are more or less Russians.

The first thing I saw, as I made my way under the porch, was a strongly built, gleaming limousine—a highly-powered car ; a little

further on was a door which I pushed open. And so I reached the hall.

All its occupants were workers. That was evident. They were wearing the genuine proletarian dress. Everything on them, from the soft collar and tie loosely tied down to their stout leather boots, showed the sacred and sturdy simplicity of the workman. Besides they were all perfectly idle. Seated on their chairs they were smoking Moscow cigarettes with cardboard holders, which had come from the other end of Europe in the Embassy bag.

Having stated the object of my visit, I was conducted into the 'Red Room.' As its name implies, it was all bedecked in scarlet. Its walls were bare like a rosy dawn, with the exception of the end wall, which was embellished by a portrait of Lenin. This was the first portrait of the Soviet hero to be seen in the house, which, like every other house in Russia, was covered with them. This picture, intended for the notice of every visitor, and especially for those in a hurry, is a portrait for propaganda purposes. It deserves to be described.

In it you see the late-lamented chief in the get-up of a foreman. Lenin, standing full in

the sunlight in a factory courtyard, is thickly shod. He wears a cap with a stiff board peak. He looks unpretentious and full of energy, with a suggestion of being in his Sunday best. He has a workman's square-set shoulders and a thoughtful brow—in short, he is just as the apostle of the proletariat should look. All this is quite effective. On the red cloth over the table lay some trade reviews.

Then came one of the doorkeepers. He pointed with his finger first at me and then at the door, and said, 'Follow me.'

We crossed a courtyard whose newly-laid gravel crunched under our footsteps. The offices of the Embassy are, as formerly, in the left wing of the old building. We went in. Then it was quite a different matter.

Inside were the Embassy attachés, exactly like their colleagues throughout the whole world, that is to say good-looking young men, rather haughty, and dressed up to the nines. Behind them was a background of telephones. There were telephones everywhere, chiefly in those indiscreet niches by means of which the office rooms communicate with each other. There was nothing but ringing, green wires, calls, ringings off and the buzzings of the

receivers. Is the soul of the new Russia telephonic to this degree?

I explained my request. That would require time and photographs, an amazing number of photographs. Besides, the Embassy Comrade would have to refer the matter to Moscow. No hope of starting before a fortnight at the earliest.

Actually it took a whole month, entirely spent in orders, counter-orders, visits and formalities. Finally I was able, at the end of July, to strap up my portmanteaus and, furnished with a passport on which were a sickle and hammer intercrossed, to take my place at the Gare du Nord in the Berlin-Riga train.

\* \* \* \* \*

It took two whole days to reach the Latvian capital. First of all we had to cross Germany, with its cast-iron stations, black and glazed, where porters attired like the Kaiser's generals march up and down and play with a whistle. The train went on in the rain. Sometimes through the early morning smoke could be seen a swarm of travellers and tongue-tied school children.

We passed through Berlin with its five

stations, then the rugged plains of Prussia, then the 'Polish Corridor,' where at dead of night in a storm heavy enough to drown the whole train everybody was bundled pell-mell into the guard's vans. This corridor is full of draughts. Then came Eastern Prussia and finally Lithuania.

Next we skirted the Niemen, whose pale waters still reflect the shades of the Great Army. On we went towards Tilsit. We passed through Eylau and Friedland. I could not help thinking that *they* marched barefoot along this road, that *they* bivouacked on these endless plains. Ancient history!

On these arid tracks the frontiers meet. The enemy Baltic states divided the territory among themselves after the war, as greedy cousins hack out portions of an inheritance. We were in Latvia; more money changing. How strange it is that all these poverty-stricken countries check our money which we have to purchase, whether we like it or not, at the price of the dollar. Possibly financiers have an unanswerable explanation for this procedure. But to the average man it seems ridiculous that people who have no money, no trade, and who don't work, can buy for a fifth of their value the goods of an enterprising and hardworking

people. To a Frenchman travelling in these latitudes it is rather a disturbing thought that a Latvian peasant can, at his own sweet will, sell his property and for each acre of his wretched field buy five good acres of good French vineyards. All that simply by the favour of Mercury, God of Financiers. It is no use telling us that inflation is wealth ; that requires thinking over.

The process of thinking helped us to be patient as far as Riga. From the top of the bridge thrown over the Dwina could be seen a huge flotilla of rafts, like an island of pale wax dancing in the twilight. A country of laughter and lovers. Along the roads by the railway we saw nothing but couples embracing and windows decked with flowers.

But the station is a gloomy halt—dark, smelly and noisy. All the filth of the North-East seems to have accumulated on these wooden platforms. A queue was forming up at the Moscow ticket office. I was beside a Ukranian Communist returning from Spain ; he had no hat, an alpaca waistcoat, a comb in his pocket and a little towel under his arm. Outside the station flaunted in the pavilions of an International Exhibition flashy-looking, jerry-built

shops. The weather was gloomy, threatening and stormy. A smell of perspiration and soot mingled with faint smells of incense. Three hours to wait. We decided to take a walk.

So here was I all alone at the gates of mystic Russia, alone among these giant Latvians whose fathers hurled their javelins and drove their wooden-wheeled ploughshares. They sang, laughed, and jostled one another.

A dancing hall? We went to look at it. It was only a 'Capuziner'<sup>1</sup> after the German style, with dark woodwork lit up by two violet-shaded chandeliers. Underneath them every face assumed a purple hue. At the end of the hall a piano could be discerned, whose lid was raised like the stone of a tomb to let out fox-trots from another world. Three short-cropped revellers were bawling for wine.

'Death draws near,  
He brings good cheer,'

as says a cheery German song. To think that only two days ago exactly I was watching the lights of Montmartre turn slowly up to be lost in the night.

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<sup>1</sup> Literally, a Monk's Cell, but selected as a fantastic name for a Cabaret.—*Translator's Note.*



Where was I? A shrill whistle reminded me. The Zilupe-Sebej train was sending out its first warning towards the silver-edged clouds. The station was full of hoarse farewells. The wood-heated engine blinded you with huge puffs of smoke. The whistle pierced the thick air. Travellers sniffed back their tears, tore themselves from embraces and ran along the train, their little basket bundles swaying. We started. The train rolled on in the darkness. It was midnight. We were due to cross the Red frontier in the morning.

## CHAPTER II

### *THE RED TRAIN*

WE were thirteen in the shaky carriage, all bound for Moscow. Thirteen, five of whom were Chinese and one a Chinese-German, aged one year, the son of a kind of Mandarin and a fair-haired Hamburg maiden. The whole party, accompanied by the mother-in-law and the grandmother, were going to Vladivostock by the Trans-Siberian.

In the next compartment were two Berlin business men. I had as neighbours two Russian girls with pigtails, unrimmed pince-nez and bare legs, quite in accordance with the Soviet fashion. Last of all, all by himself at the end of the corridor, as unperturbed as a judge of one of the courts of Hell, was a man in gold spectacles, who never lost sight of any of his travelling companions.

The train rolled on and clanged like a string of barges chained together. The night was

heavy, black and breathless. Nights such as these on Eastern lines make the corridor of a train something like the deck of a steamer. At first you notice things and then you piece them together. Thus I became aware that my neighbour, a Berlin metal worker who was making his first journey in Russia, was informing himself about the country by means of a Baedeker's Guide of 1912, which he showed to me.

'A book like that,' said I, 'will make people notice you pretty quickly over there.'

'So!'

Yes, because of the colour of its cover.'

The German began to laugh as he fondled the scarlet back of his guide book. He handed it to me. The work, printed in the days of the Tsars, was strangely upsetting reading. In it Moscow was called 'Little Mother.' The cab horses were the subject of a moving couplet, as also were the club dances of the nobility. And there was a discussion about the 'Chirokaïa Natura,' or generous nature, of the Muscovites. There were to be found such tit-bits of information as the following: 'Public safety is not different in Russia from that prevailing in the rest of Europe. It is quite useless to carry arms, except for sporting purposes.'

I could not help smiling when my eye fell on this passage: 'The Russian Empire is under the rule of the most Absolute Monarchy.' And on this one: 'Letters which attract attention in any way are usually opened at the Post Office.' There are some quaint things in those old books.

It was scarcely two o'clock when a dawn of ashy blue rose over the Lithuanian forests. The train went groaning on. We were getting near. Attendants brought lemonade and tea. The mongrel child began to cry and its parents comforted it, its mother in German, its father in Chinese. The man in gold spectacles sat stock still on a stool and his icy gaze did not leave us.

Day broke and with it came the police, who restored to us our passports. Then the train stopped and went on again.

Soon in the bright sunlight we saw a sort of sentry box, painted with red and white stripes, which marked the end of the Latvian steppes. Finally we stopped before four soldiers in top boots and armed to the teeth. Their uniforms were of greeny-white calico and their helmets like purple turbans. All four were smoking. They were the Red Guards.

A kind of horn sounded. We were entering Soviet territory. Beside an embankment was a man in rags fast asleep. Our arrival woke him up. A little girl was swaying on a see-saw, looking at a pale sky, as blue and empty as her own eyes.

In revolutionary countries custom-house officials are not afraid of appearing imaginative. I have seen that in the Sinn Feiner of Ireland, in Italy during the first months of Fascism, and in Greece when the ministers were being shot. But I imagine that the examination for a post in the Customs of the Soviet Union includes some skill on the trapeze. Scarcely had we arrived than the officials walked on the top of our carriage roofs, while others climbed under the bogies. Meanwhile lavatories were swept clean and sleeping couches upset, like cards in the hands of a gigantic croupier. My suit cases were opened wide. Nothing whatever was touched. One of the officials who spoke French asked me :

‘ Where are you going ? ’

To Moscow.’

‘ Are you a diplomatist ? ’

‘ No, a journalist.’

‘Have you any papers?’

‘None.’

He bowed to me, and, followed by his guards, whose rifles clattered against the wood-work, made his way towards the sons of the Celestial Empire.

I was thus able to have a look at the frontier station and the first versts of Communistic land. Shall I say that I felt moved in any way? That would not be true. One sets off for this country, which seems the most distant in the world, with so many contradictory feelings. The gates of the Riddle had been reached. Was it Icaria<sup>1</sup> or Paestum,<sup>2</sup> Eldorado or Gomorrha? Imagination set to work, and you lay awake thinking.

For the time being I had stretching beneath my view a real war country with its corrugated-iron huts, smeared with wine-coloured paint and roofed with uneven canvas. It might have been a hospital, a prisoners' camp, or a dumping ground. Goods trains lay idle in sidings, old rolling stock stamped at the side

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<sup>1</sup> An extremely attractive island in the Greek Archipelago.  
—*Translator's Note.*

<sup>2</sup> An old Greek city, noted for the beauty of its roses.—  
*Translator's Note.*

with the emblem of the U.S.S.R. shown not by the sickle and hammer but with an axe and anchor intercrossed. Seated on benches in the sun, bearded peasants were smoking silently. Officials went up and down the train. Tall, clean-shaven, strapping fellows with a 'top-dog' look about them, they had, if one might say so, the smartness of Montparnasse. Were they painters who favoured the Dôme or the Rotonde? <sup>1</sup> Who knows?

Meanwhile the Bolshevik train was being made up. Our party took their places in the wagon-lit. The interior was pink—that is to say, the paddings had been recovered with hammer-cloth striped red and white like bathing tents at the seaside. There was a huge wagon-restaurant, one of those compartments of old-time Russia, and of course very large. Wide leather armchairs, tables big enough for a wedding breakfast, and everything else on the same scale. Between the two saloons was a door, and one's eye sought involuntarily for a tall, shadowy figure, thick set, bald-headed, with square-cut beard—the ghost in his lace

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<sup>1</sup> Well-known Cafés in Montparnasse patronized by local artists of rival schools.—*Translator's Note.*

tunic of the Tsar Alexandrovitch, who had this carriage built to fit his figure.

Three trumpet blasts. At the third we set off. It was to come into a forest of larches and birch-trees, which for five hundred versts and during ten hours of train journey covered the plain. The railway ran through them straight as a plumb line. Further and even further was a deserted station without town or village, with a Red Guard smoking dreamily. Then the night fell——

At that same moment, by the gas light of a candelabra, I saw against the carriage wall a strange image. Under a mass of bright colours it represented a citizen in a soft hat, standing before an iron gateway. An arrow of gold coming out from it showed a huge red hand, and this red hand was pointing to a machine which changed bundles of paper notes into heaps of roubles. What was it then? You'd never guess. It was an advertisement of a Soviet loan.

To travel three thousand kilometres, across eight frontiers—and find that! The world indeed is small. I thought to myself that the hand which pointed at this machine, so marvellous as to change worthless paper into pure gold,



this red hand might just as well have been white—or black.

Then my thoughts took another direction. I thought that this first contact with life in a Communist or Marxist country, even if it had some surprises for a citizen of the middle-class nations, a westerner imbued with capitalist prejudices, would have no surprises for him as regards its habits. A proletarian loan? Yes, for nothing is so like workers' finance as middle-class finance. Six per cent is six per cent everywhere and, as far as that goes, the Russian stocking is worth just as much as the cotton stocking. Perhaps the result of my inquiry will show that the red hand is sufficient to change the nature of the banking operations. But faced by public notices of the Gospek (the Soviet State Bank) I said to myself that selling property creates property owners. I could not get away from that dilemma. Of course, when I came here, I did not expect to see people walking about head over heels. My curiosity as an old European did not ask as much as that. But only in a spirit of cynical disillusion could I consider this appeal for domestic economy issued by a revolutionary government to the masses who thought to

destroy the old world to cries of 'Smert bourjouien !' ('Death to the middle-classes !')

On the morning of the second day we reached Moscow. Our carriage having battled with the assault of porters, we were able to make our way out. At the exits employees were collecting the tickets. Cabmen on the square were on the look out for fares. It was a station like every other station. My Chinese got lost in the crowd with the Germans. The two Marxist travellers, their poor-looking luggage in tow, disappeared toward the main thoroughfares. The silent man came out last. His hard, narrow glance followed me along the platform. Whilst my luggage was being weighed I felt this gaze, sharp as the point of a compass, on the back of my neck. At the moment when I was going to leave, when I was actually turning my eyes towards the city with the four hundred belfries, I saw the man standing on the uneven pavements and his eye still held me.

## CHAPTER III

### *DISCOVERY OF MOSCOW*

**I**N one place the Moscow train passes under an arch of foliage on which the Soviets had written, 'Hail to the workers of the West.'

But the travellers who enter Soviet Russia under these green boughs are not workers. They are bankers, diplomatists, journalists, motor-car dealers, contractors for corn, agents for mining or petrol groups, representatives of the International, agitators from Asia, secret sedition mongers, German manufacturers—a great many of these last. But of workers, not one. So that the greeting from the proletarians of the East to their comrades of the West is only a symbolic greeting, merely an official welcome expressed in terms of a workman and peasant formula. At any rate, this arch is a very felicitous greeting to the visitors (even the middle-class ones) to the proletarian country. One can't help preferring the greenery of the countless Dictator to the black gateway of the

Tsarist police which it has replaced. The only inconvenience about it comes from the inscription which promises much, which has perhaps the fault of promising too much, on the very threshold of those places where no one can help feeling an excited curiosity.

What was my first impression of Moscow on this dull and depressing morning in the summer of 1925? I expected to find something quite unusual, superhuman, a sort of urban and social futurism. What I saw on a sharply paved square was a hundred small cabs, two or three broken-down racing cars, shaggy-haired policemen, a double row of friends and relations awaiting the travellers.

It is true that the drivers call themselves *Izvoschtchiks*, and the little square is known as *Krestovkaïa*. It is true that these people of all classes are now all of one class, and that the man who whips up the horse is the equal of the man who gets into the carriage. So doctrine would have it. But you have to be quite certain of this fact, and if you did not know it, you would imagine that you were in front of the station of some county town or other in no matter what country.

Such were my thoughts when Monsieur Fine came up to me. Monsieur Fine, 'Guide and Interpreter,' Savoy Hotel Porter, who tracks out and marks down for the Kremlin, deserves a description. Every one of the very few visitors to Moscow knows Monsieur Fine; the reporters of the whole world have written about his existence, and Paul Morand has compared him to a Venetian Senator. Personally, I viewed Monsieur Fine less romantically. If I had to paint his portrait I should not borrow the palette of a Tiepolo. With his crushed panama, his stubby grey beard, his furtive step and his armlet, he was more like an elderly gentleman in control of a fishing party than a member of the Council of Ten.

Monsieur Fine was the only man to speak in the hall.

'I speak English. Ich spreche deutsch. Prego, prego! Hotel Savoy. Hotel Savoy! . . . Sir, Sir.'

As soon as he saw me, he took possession of me with a marked air of authority. He summoned a smoky creaking break-down, which he called grandiloquently a taxi. My luggage upon it and the price agreed upon, we set off.

How hot it was! The sun came straight

down from the torrid sky, and its rays fell heavily upon the shoulders, like tailoring irons. Monsieur Fine, however, kept asking me questions, and his manner was so cheerful and disinterested that he would have put on their guard even the most tactless gossips.

We passed along dismal, gloomy main thoroughfares through a good deal of mud. In the side streets was practically nobody. Moscow rises late. For two hundred and twenty francs a day the Hotel Savoy could only give me a sort of stove with a bath in it on the top of the building. In spite of Monsieur Fine's optimistic eagerness I showed my distaste and took up my suitcase again.

In my impatience to mingle with the crowd I went by tram. That required a lesson in procedure and discipline. You get on to the tram by the rear platform and get off it by the other. Smoking is forbidden. Inside I set about examining the people. Nothing was more easy than to classify them. A tram has only one class, which at first sight comprises one single type of citizen. They are poor, clean and silent. Not a word, except to ask the conductor for a ticket. Some peasants, a

few soldiers, and some young women, nearly all of them pretty and tastefully dressed in Paris fashion. Most of the men were carrying large attaché cases, locked.

We crawled slowly on beneath a leaden sun. Towards a square, not far from a monument crowned by a quadriga, a strange-looking traveller appeared. Save for a pair of bathing drawers he was completely naked. That did not seem to surprise the company. An old lady sitting opposite me was the only one to turn aside her head. One had merely to look at her a little carefully to recognize a lady of the old days. She must have been extremely handsome, elegant if rather haughty. Over hair dressed in Jane Hading style she wore a bonnet, evidently of that period. How many showers of rain had soaked the poor straw! Everything in this woman's face showed the wrinkles which tears make : they had lined her flesh, their source was dried up. Two large tearless eyes were looking into the past.

The old lady rose and got out, dragging feet shod in a man's elastic-sided boots. Against her thin body she pressed an umbrella with a long silver handle. She passed, without noticing her, a working girl with rosy cheeks, wearing

a red tam o'shanter, and carrying under the sleeve of her waterproof a bundle of papers and pamphlets.

Perhaps it was the Russia of yesterday and the Soviet Republic that I saw pass each other on the pavement in front of the tramway steps.

I found a room. Its window looked on to the Voskressenkaïa Square near the Duma, exactly opposite the doorway with its two belfries and the Spanish Chapel—where formerly the Tsar used to pray. Could I have expected better lodgings? At present the Voskressenkaïa Square is called Revolution Square, and the Duma has become the Soviet Hostelry; the Tsar is only a shot-riddled spectre.

But before her screen the Iberian Virgin is still the eikon dear to Muscovite hearts. A haughty, glazed image, she sits in state behind her candles with thirty golden flames. On a wall near by the Soviets have written, 'Religion is the opium of the people.' But the little chapel, open at daybreak, is never empty before nightfall.

From my window I could see the crowds ceaselessly re-forming, borne like a flood towards this sacred promontory crowned with its blue



cupola. To right and left, through the entrances of the chapel doorway, the crowd pressed on between two rows of hawkers. The horses of countless cabs trotting by made the pavement ring. Fully laden trams rang their bells. Motor horns hooted. A dozen workmen were hammering down a wall. The whole city murmured and scolded in the sunlight. But the tiny chapel welcomed its worshippers ceaselessly, and before the Virgin with an idol's chilly glance, amid a faint scent of wax and incense which reached the street, the people of the Soviet Republic crossed themselves fearfully, whilst the faces of the priests, like the Apostles and Evangelists, were suffused with the sunlight, their beautiful forms soiled with dirt whose lower layers dated from the reign of the last Romanoff.

A procession of children came along headed by a red flag. A bell rang. An old coachman beat up his horse which trotted under its high arched headstall. On the pavement a twenty-five-year-old soldier was reading a paper; he was a divisional general. A shoeblack from Tiflis with a waxed moustache was polishing the thin shoes of a work-girl. The sunlight fell like a cross on the blood-red wall of a

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Revolutionary Palace. 'Holy Russia.' . . .  
'Forward, workers and peasants!' . . . .  
'Most Holy Lady, Giver of all Joys, protect us.'  
. . . 'Comrades, we must increase production.'

And the bells sounded the Angelus, whilst  
Communist children were singing :

'To Heaven we'll go  
And bust up the whole show.

But theirs were the voices of Mary's children,  
and the evening seemed to hang pale blue  
streamers over their red flag.

## CHAPTER IV.

### *THE PALACE OF FUN*

**M**ARK TWAIN or some other American humorist was obviously wanted. The "Bolchaïa Moskowskaïa" was formerly a first-class hotel, which the Government has just re-opened for visitors' use. It is probably the most comic hotel in the world.

You have to have lived there for some weeks in order to appreciate the amusing side, so perfectly natural yet intensely funny, of the most ordinary objects, when some controlling force moved by the best intentions uses them for the exactly opposite purpose to that for which they were intended.

I have seen travellers (mainly Germans) get annoyed on seeing, early in the morning, a conscientious plasterer come into their room by the window and scrape the walls with upraised arm. Other tenants could not get accustomed to admitting (whether they liked it or not) the Council of the Floor who generally

came to brush and clean up while they were beginning to dress.

One day menservants in blouses and top boots went ceremoniously from room to room to re-stuff the worn-out furniture. A Japanese gentleman objected with a smile of icy fury. They did not insist on his being upholstered, but the Palace Council discussed the matter at length. And the low opinion formed of the Japanese sank still lower in the hearts of all.

Often the corridors of the "Bolchaja Moskovskaja" echoed with all the oaths of Babel. The name of our Lord was blasphemed in every language without, however, shocking the international staff of this international hotel intended for the comfort of visitors. For this staff that has been passed through the red sieve of the Guépéou only speaks Russian, and is as indifferent to cosmopolitan fury as a deaf man to a humming-bird.

The moment a traveller began to call out, the servants stood round in a circle and each held forth in turn to dispute his opinion with an extraordinary speed. That went on for about half an hour, during which the traveller, foaming at the mouth, continued to ask himself, 'What on earth can they mean?'

Traveller, you will never know that !

When the meeting was over, the servants went off on their revolutionary business to smoke papirosses and read the 'Pravda', having first remembered to cut the bell wires so as not to be disturbed in their most harmless occupation.

You can imagine that the furnishing of these rooms was not carried out without some almost priceless effect, particularly unexpected, and that modern touch quite in conformity with the spirit of the new times. Hence the windows had no blinds because they had been nailed up on the doorways. Since in Moscow the sun rises about half-past two in summer time, you then had, between dawn and the time for your coffee, plenty of opportunity for studying the ways of the Russian fly. It is true that a good sleeper pays no attention to flies or sun. But highly-strung people, who cannot close their eyes, asked for the curtains to be put up again in their places. Then there was a Council Meeting, followed of course with a silence heavy with scorn.

Besides, every day there was a change of staff, both on the floor and in the wing, obviously for fear it might tarnish its Communistic purity

by contact with citizens from the west. This arrangement, too, afforded strangers the opportunity of practising the deaf and dumb alphabet in every particular. Every day everything had to begin all over again. For to-day's waiter did not understand the signs you made to instruct his predecessor. So that all the arts of Abbé Séverin would be required merely to get a cup of coffee.

Sometimes the Comrade-in-Chief, victim of a sudden perplexity, imagined that a traveller was not satisfied with his quarters. Then, whatever time it might be, the Comrade-in-Chief went off personally to wake up his tenant, in order to make him inspect the hotel in which, as a matter of fact, there would not be a single room vacant for several days. You got back to your own room cursing, you got to sleep again, reduced to a pulp and feeling as if your limbs had been hacked by a sickle. It was the hammer which woke you up again ; with much banging something was being nailed against your door.

Then up you got and hastened to wash and dress, for if you had not opened your door by eleven to comrades' chambermaids and citizen sweepers, the room would not be done. You

would put that right, when you came home late at night, by making your bed yourself. And that would not be a very trying or difficult business. You had only to deal with a bedstead, a bolster and a mattress flat as a pancake. Why, the most awkward person got it done somehow; in 1925 people of every colour had been in the ranks.

A cheery idea! One must try and see the joke of it. Too comfortable a journey is the diversion of liverish peers; it's best to laugh at the farcical ways of these hotels. But your merriment ceased directly you got your bill.

What is the 'awkward moment' of Rabelais compared with the awkward moment in Moscow?

Your room with its unworkable water-taps, its cupboard that won't lock, bell that doesn't ring, and its curtainless windows, costs you between ten and twenty-two roubles, according as you prefer to live like a peasant or be able to wash.

Twenty-two roubles is twelve and a half dollars, the cost of a room in the best hotels in New York, London or Paris. Your first breakfast—a very modest affair, just a cup of coffee and some toast—costs about twenty-two

francs. That gives you, even before you have begun to dress, the tariff of Moscow prices. For dinner, a bottle of bad Crimean wine is sold for forty-five francs, a pint of beer for fifteen, a dish, served with some sort of meat and vegetables, twenty to thirty francs, a caviare sandwich thirty francs, dessert twenty-five francs, a cup of coffee five. Sometimes, there are lunatics who drink champagne. It only costs them five or six hundred francs a bottle. Would you like to puff at a cigarette? The most inferior kind costs seven francs a packet, and it is well known that Russian cigarettes, with their long cardboard tubes, have less than two inches of smoking matter. Washing, the luxury of millionaires, is done by the Chinese, and very well done too. Dazzling white shirts are sent back to you which cost you daily exactly the price of a new shirt in Paris.

Thousands of such charges could be quoted. But what is the use? A stranger cannot take a step in Moscow which, as far as expense goes, does not cost quite as much as a journey. Carriages, guides, interpreters and everything to correspond. You travellers, tourists, business men, who are inclined to visit the U.S.S.R.,



don't forget that Communism is based on contempt of the goods of this world and especially of money.

I have forgotten to tell you the name of the hotel-keeper who knows how to let his rooms and sell his meals three times as dear as anyone in the world. This hotel-keeper is none other than the Soviet State. Probably he is quite right in not allowing any competition.

## CHAPTER V

### *A SOVIET CROWD*

IT was twelve o'clock. In Moscow this is the busiest hour, when the streets are most crowded. I thought I would go out without a guide, just wherever chance took me. I would relate my impressions as a stranger exactly as I had first felt them. The consequence might be that the walks, on which I desired to take the reader, would seem rather frivolous. But more deliberate judgments could be added quite soon enough. If there were any mystery about them, so much the better. We would leave for the moment the key of the riddle hanging on its nail; we would dawdle about Moscow, for that is the best way to get to know a town.

It was twelve o'clock. Smiling summer shed a haze over the crowds. There are not ten umbrellas among a million Muscovites. If it rains, there is a general stampede. If you are

afraid of getting wet, take an *istvostchick* ; the driver will pull down the hood and you will see nothing. So it is better to follow the crowd hurrying along under the sunlit showers.

The hotel was situated in a quarter of gardens and shops. Hawkers swarmed there and did a thriving trade. They stood, forming a double row, offering their stock, some by hand, others from a basket or a carrier's box ; they never put it on the ground, for the policeman soon drives off all such trash. His takings are pretty extensive.

To reach the centre of the city you had to force your way between two rows of women shouting their wares. The men hawkers, less eager or more phlegmatic, leant against the walls. There, too, you could see Chinamen, the subject of horrible report, who, with their hands lately steeped in Russian blood, were offering such ladies as passed silk stockings and garters.

This market was a girdle of many colours, whose streamers bound round the foot of each monument. It met, untied, stretched endlessly away under an eastern light. The sun, coming out again, scorched pitilessly this chain of misery and motley and stifling smells.

Everything was on sale—books, sashes, dolls, Caucasian caps, expiring pigs, scent-squirts, soviet badges, old clothes, whistles, kodaks, caviare spoons. There were poor old men, 'bourjouis' of former days, selling the last remnants of their splendour. A veteran of sixty with a head like a general was offering passers-by a talc pipe. Up came a policeman, and the whole lot ran off.

Further on were peasants from the Moscow suburbs. Their trade was in flowers and fruit, a mystery which later on we shall doubtless understand. These Merry Jacks were not afraid of the police. When a passer-by looked likely to stop, they held up their nosegays all together. And at the feet of these peasants of former days were regular pyramids of large plums, green and purple; bunches of Crimean grapes, the colour of a moonlit night; mosaics of gleaming lemons, green apples, ripe pears, Tiflis water-melons showing insides like raspberry-coloured sherbet, black cherries, sad looking, like clots of blood, rustic toys, and scarlet sticks, tied up with ribbons. On the ground level drivers upset baskets and bundles. Smoke from papirosses rose up blue and scented the air with a faint opium. All was aglow in

the bright midday light, in this girdle which reminded you at one time of a Persian carpet, at another of Petrouitchka's skirt.<sup>1</sup>

But you had only to turn into the next side street. Shouts and bright hues were immediately gone. Now in the streets were only to be seen an anxious hurrying crowd—citizens of the Soviet capital.

Men and women came, went, passed one another, met face to face, without a word or a smile. Laughter is dead in Moscow and silence is king; the very pavement hears each word that it ought not to hear.

In a side street at the end of the Nicolskaïa, stood a cheap-jack in the middle of a gathering. He was distributing tickets for a sort of Italian lottery. A workman in bluish leather won a powder box; another huge fellow (some Cossack in former days) won a lady's handkerchief embroidered in pink; a sunburnt ploughman got an even more gruesome present. But nobody laughed. The cheap-jack himself looked like some official, and when everything

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<sup>1</sup> A burlesque by Stravinsky, first published in 1912.—  
*Translator's Note.*

was over, the gathering of working people scattered among the crowd.

You would have never tired of watching the life of this crowd hustling along the commonplace streets of New Moscow. Slavish and Asiatic dress of every kind met there. Most of the men wore the good old Russian blouse. But, strange to say (in a country devoted to red), this blouse once scarlet is now white, grey or black. Many of them went bare-headed, though some wore summer hats of white canvas, broad in the head, with a peak coming down over the face. Many women wore this hat just as the men do. They were not as a rule the prettiest.

These last (for there are some) were dressed like the Paris ladies. What a number of shingled heads and high heels! Rings on the fingers, watch-bracelets on the wrists. Hats very smart. At five o'clock in the afternoon, the Petrovká where the big shops are, is like the Rue la Fayette. Taxis made their way with loud hootings of their horns, motor-buses went rattling by.

How far were we then from scenes of revolution? Where was this starving Moscow raising its domes like souls in hell above the field of

murder? That is a picture of past days, old tales of weepings and memories. To-day, ladies and gentlemen, it is the N.E.P. (the New Economic Policy) freely applied.

The time by the five hundred thousand watch-bracelets which Moscow wears on its wrist, its sleeve, turned up, has changed. Life triumphs over theories.

Here were the Arcades, and opposite the Kremlin a sort of Town Hall, with a glass roof known as 'Riady.' It was as like the famous Galleries of Milan<sup>1</sup> as a village church is like a cathedral. This hideous palace of iron, stucco and glass, was and still continues to be the meeting place of business men. We will come back to it later.

The shops in the 'Riady,' which with those of Petrovka are the richest in Moscow, displayed their wares. A smart tailor was arranging English cloth on which was pinned many a copy of a gentleman in a suit and eight shades of its cloth. This seemed surprising in a country in which, as a rule, everyone dresses

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<sup>1</sup> Where the Milanese conduct much business.—*Translator's Note.*

modestly and where the slightest effort to look smart is a proof of an anti-revolutionary spirit. A dressmaker exhaled a scent of the Rue de la Paix which had come in a box by the North Express. Fashions, perfumes, novelties. The 'righteous,' both men and women, in their black blouses, passed by these allurements from the west without turning their heads. Were they afraid of temptation?

The heat under the glass was like a hothouse. We made for the Nicolskaïa, an unfashionable street with its churches, dilapidated shops, crowds of employees, cigarette sellers, refreshment stalls, Kalmucks,<sup>1</sup> and 'Little Russians.' Motor-horns hooted angrily.

What strikes the traveller, come from happy countries, is the resurrected appearance of everything. New Moscow is like a commercial tomb open to the sun. Will the autumn winds bear away these dust-laden shrouds? What good things of days gone by, and how sad is the discreet way in which you are recommended to buy them! A wine-merchant who lives in an old and famous French house has

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<sup>1</sup> A Mongolian family of peoples in South-Eastern Russia.  
—*Translator's Note.*



got some 'pre-revolution' cognac; that calls to mind the sad memory of the 'liqueur of Mme. Anfoux,' the delight of the Emigrés of 1793. At the doorway of the old palaces, you see bearded footmen in fine uniforms, rather worn away. You can't help thinking that these coats have just been re-trimmed; for seven years stripped of their braid and brass buttons, they were used for the clothing of the proletariat. The gold lace has been found again at the bottom of the cupboards, neatly folded up in soft paper, and has been resewn on cuffs, collar, and round the cap. All this is not without significance. It marks a date. The Terror generally ends with the return of trimming.

## CHAPTER VI

### *LENIN, DEAD YET PRESENT*

'His name carried so much weight throughout the Empire after his death that he still reigned even from his death-bed.'—Lamartine: *History of Russia, Peter the Great.*

A SOLEMN and well-marked chant arose. From my window I saw a troop of heavy-booted soldiers. They were crossing Revolution Square to reach the mysterious heart of Moscow, the Kremlin, through the Iberian Gate. They were the Red Guards returning from parade.

With their steady, heavy march they reached the Krasnaïa, whose name the Soviets had no need to change—Red Square. Here are the Florentine ramparts, battlements, portcullis, domes, golden chains and ikons. And there, outside the forecourt, right at the end of the square, was that delightful, ugly, quaint and rich-looking cathedral St. Basil, squat on its foundations, built low, a folly in shape and

colour. With its twelve pineapple-shape domes like twisted onions, gold melons, caramels and lemon-hued pears—with its towers that stand up like reeds, its walls striped in many colours, it looks from close at hand like a cake made by fairies for the table of a giant Tsar seated on the Caucasus.

Turn your eyes from this far-famed monument and you will see in the middle of the square a building of a very different character. It is violently modern, that is to say, primitive. In the middle of an island fenced in by black iron railings you will see a solid mass of woodwork with lumps like nut-shells on its sides. A handrail on each side and a row of portholes are the only breaks in its uniformity. It looks like the back part of an ark, planed down and quite bare. On the ground floor a door opens on to a cavern in which the darkness seems tinged with red. Two soldiers stood before this door, absolutely still and face to face, their arms grounded and staring fixedly at each other.

It is Lenin's tomb.

Here lies the dead chief, embalmed and in a glass coffin. Every evening from eight to ten the crowd is admitted to gaze upon these

remains, and every evening a queue forms up to do so. The number of visitors extends far beyond St. Basil, sometimes as far as the banks of the Moskva. It is mainly soldiers that are to be seen there, as well as the 'righteous' with their heads bound in scarlet handkerchiefs, and haughty-looking clerks in silk shirts. But it is the true Russian crowd, so patient, mystic and flea-ridden—the same crowd which mutters Pater-Nosters before the gilded images and the candles with their pale flames. And they all file before the corpse of the man who killed the Little Father and by dying in his turn became commander of the followers of the new faith.

Lenin, now a hero, dead eighteen months ago, watches from behind the windows of his coffin and gazes upon this new East which is his work.

Lenin, once the outlaw, wandering in misery, in his last days took the place of the Tsar. The peasants called him Little Father. He was, in fact, the last Tsar. What a great and wonderful story was this life's journey from a lodging house in Montmartre to the Kremlin. The poor people knew it—those who come and tremble in front of these dried-up Mongolian

features. But is not this building which weighs down upon him, this crypt lit with the gloomy light of its flames, this square-set temple with its pentagonal front, this childish attempt at architecture—is it not, I ask, the foremost building of Israel—the foremost in the world since the destruction of Solomon's temple? Yes, so much so that of the two monuments facing each other at the foot of the Kremlin, the Cathedral built in the days of Ivan the Terrible, and the wooden mausoleum nailed together in January, 1924, the older in time is not perhaps the church with its cross-crowned cupolas.

In the length and breadth of Moscow nothing else is to be seen but the portrait of Lenin. It is a regular obsession. That oval-shaped head, tufted chin, those slits of eyes and thoughtful, vague-looking face are to be met with at every step. Such publicity stamps them for ever on your mind. Lenin everywhere, in every shop window, whatever the goods on sale. Reproductions of Lenin, etchings of Lenin, prints of Lenin, Lenin in mosaic, on linoleum, on the ink-pot, the blotting pad. Whole shops are devoted to the sale of his busts; they are of all

shapes, materials, prices, in bronze, marble, stone, porcelain, alabaster and plaster, without counting the Lenins portrayed in every 'guise,' from the posed photograph to the snapshot and the film. A million portraits—and perhaps more. As if this were not enough, there are his doubles, the highbrow or shrewd citizens who try to look like Lenin. They are innumerable, and most of them wonderfully successful. I suppose that there are more than ten thousand counterfeit Lenins in Moscow, adorned with imperials carefully trimmed after the best portraits of their model.

Where else have we noticed this plethora of images, this efflorescence of amazing likenesses? Why, at Rome. After Lenin's, the face of which the greatest number of copies are printed is undoubtedly that of Mussolini. Another detail in which Fascism and the Red Star are alike. Doubtless dictatorships, all forms of dictatorships, beget this taste for portrayal and imitation.

It is certainly true that Lenin seems a prophet in the land of Sovietism. His work is the Gospel and the Koran. In many a difficulty people quote his words like verses from the

Bible. The N.E.P. (New Economical Policy), which by reason of its widespread energies asserts the right of the first consideration everywhere, claims Lenin as its own. It is true that in November, 1921, he inspired their hearts with this famous speech, 'We must retreat, fighting on our way.'

Since that date the retreat has become more marked and the Russian army of the economic war has continued to re-form in positions previously prepared. We shall have to consider what still remains of Communism and Marxism in the life to-day of the Soviet country. At any rate it is in Lenin's name, in the name of the stern, moody, uncorruptible apostle, that the newly coined money has begun to ring on the counters. Lenin, who died so poor—poor, rich, have these words still any meaning for the pure socialist as he was?—Lenin still sleeps in the heart of Moscow. But the common round of daily needs still passes by his sepulchre. A hundred yards away are the Muscovite Arcades, whose lofty windows protect the goings and comings of speculators. In the Nicolskaïa passers-by, in hushed voices, importune all who have pounds or dollars to sell. Stock-jobbing and property owning have begun again. Can it

be the dawn of the Directorate? Does anyone know? The poet Tioutchev<sup>1</sup> has said, 'No one can understand Russia by reasoning.' Here the future lies only on the knees of the old gods. Everything seems to last just for to-day in this country where centuries are hours. Russia goes on with her swaying steps, without haste, towards an unknown fate. Who knows? Or what can one understand? How separate yesterday from to-morrow?

In the busiest street of Moscow I saw a man who sold church requisites. His shop had two windows. In the one on the right were jewels, sacred vases, altar cloths and monstrances. In the left window were red flags, adorned with the orthodox design, a sickle and hammer. The Soviet writes on the walls, 'Religion is the opium of the people.' But he shuts his eyes to the trade of piety and its drugs. And what does to-morrow matter? *Nitchevo!* By passing on into the eternal darkness Lenin has perhaps established his spirit more firmly in the soul of Russia, the patient, capricious, wearied, silent soul of Russia.

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<sup>1</sup> Feódor Ivanovitch Tioutchev (1803-73); his poems are highly artistic but subdued in expression.—*Translator's Note.*



## CHAPTER VII

### LIFE IN MOSCOW

HOW do people live in Moscow? Would you like to hear? Well, it's like this.

Well enough when you have plenty of money; very badly when you've only a little, and when you've no money at all, you just drop out. All the old people have dropped out, and all the 'bourgeois' will do so in time, for they are not allowed either to work or to get a pass to leave Russia.

As for the others—those who call themselves 'proletarians'—they get more or less value for their roubles. That depends on their position. 'What,' my French friends will exclaim, 'do you speak to us of *position*? What does that mean? Has not Russia attained social revolution? From what you say, there must be rich comrades and poor comrades? Then what are our Communists talking about?'

And inquisitive people turning to the reporter

will ask for information about Marxism put into practice, economic equality, 'the distribution of food supplies,' about cities where life is entirely peaceful, the final and complete abolition of the instinct for ownership—in a word, on all those matters which, in the suburbs of Paris, supply subjects for Bolshevik'eloquence.

I am very sorry for our people's commissaries of the future, but the stories they tell of the U.S.S.R., in the papers and public meetings, are not the least bit like what any impartial traveller can see there. In fact, the experiment in Communism has failed, the idea of equality (according to Babeuf,<sup>1</sup> Sylvain Maréchal,<sup>2</sup> Fourier,<sup>3</sup> Bebel<sup>4</sup> and Lenin)—this ideal which inspired the October Revolution, is now only a memory. It is quite easy and quite amusing to ridicule the 'little citizen' spirit of the French. But a stay of some weeks in this Soviet country makes it as clear as daylight that all the 'little

<sup>1</sup> 'Gracchus' Babeuf (1760-97), political agitator and journalist.

<sup>2</sup> Sylvain Maréchal (1750-1803), provocative pamphleteer on sex and social questions.

<sup>3</sup> François Fourier (1772-1837), strong advocate of the co-operative system.

<sup>4</sup> August Bebel (1840-1913), foremost supporter of orthodox Marxism.—*Translator's Note.*

citizens' are not in France; and that the people's own country, the workmen's Canaan, whose shadowy form is displayed for the admiration of the workers in Puteaux<sup>1</sup> or St. Denis, is really only a capitalist rule, based like all other rules on the inequality among men, on the resignation of the weak, the energy of the strong, the tolerance of the powers that be. Such is the truth.

In France and in general throughout the west the most erroneous ideas are formed about conditions of life in Russia. We have, on that subject, only the information given out by propaganda that is much too partial to be reliable. Once more we must go back to our comparison with Fascism. Nothing externally is more like life in Moscow than life in Rome: processions, emblems, fear and silence. That is to say, reaction and revolution have only left for disappointed men a gloomy masked figure, the unknown dictator whose existence depends entirely on the grouping together of certain parties, and whose advantage is only to be attained to the detriment of the others. To

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<sup>1</sup> Two suburbs of Paris, N.W. and N. respectively and favourite 'pitches' of stump orators.—*Translator's Note.*

speaking brutally, we are faced with two sorts of Fascism. But the Fascism of Moscow is Jewish. That is doubtless the reason why its first care was to set up its flag over the banks.

As a matter of fact, Communism on its trial came to an end in 1921, at the beginning of November, when Lenin, in the presence of the Party Conference, delivered a speech which may be considered historical. He said :

‘We must retire, fighting on our way. Commerce, solely by means of exchange of goods, has not proved a success. . . . We have reached a stage necessitating a retreat, not only towards State Capitalism, but towards the control of commerce, towards the recognition of money.’

Lenin added : ‘ Let us retreat so as to resume the offensive.’ But is not that the reason alleged for all orders to retire ? The truth is that after this famous speech the system of Soviet rule did not *turn* towards State Capitalism. It is within it—absolutely within. And the U.S.S.R. has not limited itself merely to the recognition of money. It coins it in its own device at the London Mint.

The Soviet unit of money is the ‘ tchervonetz,’

worth about ten gold roubles, or about 110 francs. The citizens, who in theory are all State employed, receive in tchervonetzes a salary which varies according to their rank, their capabilities, or their loyalty. With this money they do whatever the fancy takes them. Shops, public houses, restaurants, theatres, carriages, housing, all those things which go to form the State take up the greater part of their salary. Taxation absorbs the rest. In principle, individual saving has been done away with. The Government swallows up and disgorges the money without pause, and since, according to the Soviet doctrine, the Government is everybody, the Government produces, distributes, and consumes.

A business man, an admiral, or a bottle-washer, each plays an instrument in the social orchestra. And the Government is banker, tailor, bookseller, coachman, hairdresser and hotel keeper. The Government dictates the fashions.

Such is, roughly speaking, the theory which, succeeding Communism pure and simple, is now being applied to the Russian people—'only for the time being,' say the leaders of the Third International. On the system of an

exact science? The Soviet leaders pretend that it is so. We shall have an opportunity of seeing how far this claim is true.

In every conceivable instance we shall see, as the result of this system, the famous principle of 'money for work' disappearing, yielding place to money in hard cash. In the same way, landed property has disappeared, but hoarding is not impossible, and already capital devoted to the upkeep of a business no longer rules out uninvested capital. The law forbids a man to amass riches beyond a certain amount and the right to inherit has been abolished. But there is nothing to prevent donations among the living. It is forbidden to become rich. But the Government of Moscow is already issuing a lottery loan with a sum total of five million paper francs.

Let us not laugh at them. All human institutions have their weak points. In the last century old Menger said in answer to Karl Marx, 'The only unmanageable revolutionaries will be the anarchists.'

Let us admit, then, that as far as they have gone, the Soviets are succeeding in imposing their principles. Let us admit that, in no derogatory fashion, the citizens are paid by the

system, housed by it and eat only by its hospitality, and that, in consequence of this system, there is in Russia only one kind of citizens, all equally rich and equally poor, or if you wish, equally disinterested, all functionaries of the system.

Well, then, in terms of good sociology, what is this system save State Capitalism? That such it is, cannot, I think, admit of any contradiction. The Third International, then, must come to a decision. The Communistic paradise promised to the October revolutionaries, the 'rights to property' which they proclaim at our meetings at home, all that is realized simply by the system of socializing the public services and business organizations.

Now this theory was utterly opposed at the Socialist Congresses, and its supporters, driven out of the party, were banned by the proletariat as being reactionaries—and bourgeois.

CHAPTER VIII  
*THE N.E.P., OR SPARTAN  
DELICACIES*

‘**W**HERE shall we dine?’

My companion only smiled in answer. We were seated in a little fiacre with the driver whipping hard. We passed in front of the Automobile Club, which has become the Taxi-drivers’ Soviet. A gloomy square, with windows blazing. Here was our restaurant, state-controlled of course.

In a flower-decked hall, lit up by two chandeliers and a hundred candelabras, an orchestra was roaring. A large palm stood in the middle of the room. On each tablecloth were flowers in crystal stands. Waiters in white, a head waiter in evening dress and with his notebook, ice pails and wine lists. The dinner was *à la carte*; for drinking there were Caucasian waters, Crimean wine and State vodka. Or would you prefer Bordeaux from the Imperial



cellar? There was also champagne. But to drink that, it was not enough as in our country to be an American; you had to be at least a Jew. Moscow lives economically under the system of a double dollar exchange. It is easy to understand that our ambassador is overwhelmed with entreaties, 'A visa, please—one little visa.' To see Paris for three hundred roubles (the price of a suit of clothes), the new-rich of Moscow, among whom Christians are rather rare, would gladly make a pilgrimage on foot to get away from this new Promised Land.

What, are there then at Moscow new rich? There are—they are the *Nepmen*. They are the result of the 'new political economy' and they have prospered with it. Before 1924 there was little advantage in speculating. Once caught at it you were instantly shot; if you had any interests in the Red World, you might save your skin and be sent to colonize the icebergs of the White Sea.

Times have changed: to-day M. Bourdinoff Nepman goes to the Caucasus spas, and Madame Bourdinoff wears sealskin and plush from breakfast to bedtime. It is true that such a display is not possible in Moscow. On the contrary, a sort of dress for demagogues is

mostly worn there. Suspicion is rife. The 'righteous' are there in great number. A million proletarians and many poor overcrowd the city, surrounding the Government palaces in dark and gloomy massés. The Guépéou keeps its eyes and ears open. For paper-gold is difficult to earn. In short, a statement of profits would at this hour be premature in this sacred city of Communism. Those who are pleased at their success leave it at that, knowing that such a statement might cost them dear.

How can the Spartan severity of the proletarian chiefs be reconciled with these luxurious tables, these western dinners, with their flowers and music? That is one of those contradictions to which the fiercest doctrinaires are reduced through the circumstances of life. Nothing can stand up against the law of amusement. We have already seen Paphnuce<sup>1</sup> in his desert solitude bend low his gloomy brow before Thaïs. We shall realize it still more thoroughly if we go one evening into the Tverskaïa where the gipsies' halls are. Or in Petrograd.

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<sup>1</sup> The story is told in Massenet's opera 'Thaïs' (1894).—*Translator's Note.*

Let us go back to the smartest of the 'State Restaurants.' In the dining room of this palace a very mixed lot of patrons is seated at the tables. Who are these diners? A considerable number of visitors make up the greater part of the company. The others are mostly officials. Doubtless in time we shall learn how on a salary of a hundred roubles a month they can spend two *tchervonetzes*<sup>1</sup> on their dinner, simply through their pleasure in flowers and music.

The officials are not the only people present; there are people out for business. Except that here they are more discreet, the commercial gentlemen are just as easy to make out. The 'righteous' are also to be seen, distinguished by the Lenin tufts of their beards. Others 'in the Government,' the 'true Russians,' rather Slavonic, that is to say, national, in appearance, look like the Roman fascists.

Here and there is a people's commissary—I had Monsieur Lounatchersky as my neighbour. But not a single soldier—not even one of those twenty-year old generals, distinguished from the rankers by the stars on their collars. Where

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<sup>1</sup> About 220 francs.

then was the proletariat? I looked about me to see.

Undoubtedly everyone followed the correct procedure. You went in or thrust your way out casually, quite in the Communistic style. Everyone kept his hat on; above all, no one under any consideration unfastened his pocket book. The waiter was addressed as 'Comrade'; he bowed and answered in the same tone. The proudest of the diners (and consequently the most suspected) shook him by the hand. Here too, as in all places, fear tempers the pride of the business class.

Sometimes one or two genuine 'comrades,' railwaymen, or spinners in the Trechgomaia, ventured into the room with its flawless stucco, where fifteen black musicians, perfectly dressed, gave out the plaintive strains of a Tchaikowsky suite. Then the real Moscow workers, amid this luxury and lights, behaved just as real workers throughout the whole world do when they are conscious of being out of place. They assumed an arrogant, bullying air, but they did not know what to do with their horny hands or their caps, blackened by the factory smoke. As for the head waiter, who greeted them, he was

a man of every class. He, at any rate, was doing his bit for the International.

As a matter of fact, under the lights of the lustres were people who looked like proletarians. Indeed, they looked it too much. Here were people who made a point of dressing carelessly. We spoke of a dress for demagogues. What other name can be given to this Moscow fashion, which induces men in overalls and leggings to accompany wives or mistresses dressed in the latest European fashion? One explanation is that it is due to the cost of the ready-made suits. A suitable costume costs about three thousand francs. Yes, but were the jewels and furs of the ladies less expensive? The truth is that a well-cut waistcoat, just like a well-shaved face, gives the men of Moscow that hated appearance—middle-class. So each dresses himself like a workman and swings his arms like a blacksmith, even if, during the whole of his life, the only hammer that he has seen is on the Soviet coat of arms.

This was not the place to look for the people. We must admit, alas! that its sovereignty has not changed its way of life. Inequality is everywhere. The worker is still in the factory and that fact already confirms Trotsky's pro-

clamation of 'the formation of a new kind of middle-class.' It began badly, but in the usual way—by profiteers. An opponent of the Soviet policy in his picture of life in Moscow might put the dawn as a background. But we have not yet reached the stage of painting panoramas. Our task is to describe in detail what we saw day by day.

In a fine hotel managed by the workers I have seen genuine workers come a little way in, make a half-turn as if to leave, in the midst of a complete silence. And in the general discomfort there was a sort of complicity. It seemed that there ought to be no foreign element if the Council of the Hotel Staff were to reign supreme in the room with its thousand lights. The dishes passed round and the magnums popped.

'Comrade, a coffee.' 'Yes, Comrade, in a moment.' 'Comrade, sucking pig in aspic.' 'The bill.' 'Here it is, Comrade. Thank you.'

I looked for the Dictator. Had I not seen him as he marched by on May I between the Council of the Commissariat Doorkeepers and the Council of the New Age?

Were not the restaurant waiters in their

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white liveries a part of the all-Communists? Now the theory holds that the whole should be found entire in the part. Thus the proletariat dictatorship was being brought to pass in the Council of the Grand Hotel in Moscow. The countless dictator is there. Well, my friends in France, truth obliges me to tell you that the dictator takes tips.

## CHAPTER IX

### *SEEKING FOR COMMUNISM*

**B**EHIND the Grand Theatre, at the corner of the Kouznetzy in the busiest quarter of the town, is a jeweller's shop. It is a rich-looking shop. Jewels in great number and of perfect taste are displayed on slaty-blue plush. Rows of pearls are shown there, beautiful pendants, a selection of the least plebeian looking stones, and in the centre a necklace such as only actresses supposed to have talent can afford to possess in any country. Beside it is a gold- and silver-smith's shop window, in which a row of many highly-powered lights spreads an illumination as brilliant as at a Grand Duke's supper table.

Not far from these two shops is a furrier's. Nowhere in the world are there more beautiful sables than those which in the Rojdestvenka set afire the eyes of the little Muscovite ladies.

I went in to ask the prices. Both furrier



and jeweller greeted me with the politeness of their position, whose school of instruction is the Rue de la Paix. They bowed and offered a chair. The shopmen are of course carelessly dressed in a style of workmen after the day's work. Shop windows broken at the time of the October disturbances proudly displayed how they had been patched up in the cause of democracy.

The only thing aristocratic was the price. The sable cost 800 tchervonetzes, that is to say, nearly 90,000 francs. As for the necklace, I had made a mistake. No Paris actress could have raised the price for it; it could only have been bought by assessing the whole cast of the Folies-Bergère.

Well, leaving these shops, my eyes still dazzled with their brightness, I returned to the street. It was raining. I tiptoed along, elbowed by the crowd, deafened by coachmen's shouts, and stood up against the wall of a neighbouring timber yard. Something moved beside me, and spoke to me. It was a beggar.

I thought I knew what a man in rags looked like. Fairly good specimens may be seen in Whitechapel, Naples or Smyrna. But I had not then seen this wretched creature in Moscow.

From head to foot he was just a single verminous rag. I have seen others since, but I was glad that the first should have shown himself to me from the depths of the darkness and rain, only ten yards from the two shops where you could—in the very heart of the proletarian capital—cover a lady's shoulders with a million francs' worth of pearls and furs.

Chance brings many things to pass. That is what I saw, and I am merely saying where and how it came about. I defy anyone seriously to state that I am lying. But then—have those of our countrymen who are stuffed up with promises of equality ever heard their orators tell them of the jeweller's shop in the Kouznetzy-Mosl?

I have seen other beggars, ragged creatures no longer seen anywhere else, such as Murillo painted them, displaying their sores on the pavements or waving their stumps in the sunlight; vagabonds with tattooed brows and light fingers, hideous dwarfs, children doped with cocaine, and filthy old women. And those blind people in Russia whose eyes have entirely disappeared, and whose closed-up flesh make their faces as smooth as the back of one's hand.

And lunatics at large, and beggars at church doors, surrounded with yellow greasy 'popes' and crying 'For Christ's sake, have pity. A penny, little brothers.'

These sights may be seen every day. Where? In bleak poverty-stricken by-ways, in alleys where the police don't patrol, in the slums of every town to which Governments pay no heed, not even the guardians of Moscow?

No. These sights are to be seen in the very heart of the city, close to the Kremlin, now set up as a temple of economic equality, two yards from the Rows, amid the bustle of stock-jobbers and business men. And these beggars importune you, joke and threaten. They defy the Soviet police, just as ten thousand shopmen defy it in the thick of selling their goods, though the very possibility of selling them is denied both by doctrine and law.

Theatres, bank, refreshment bars, all are there, close at hand, defiant. Hunger rattles side by side with the wedding feast, and the people in their endless patience admit it. *Nitchevo!* So many other times have they been told lies.

The newly made beggars also accept their fate with the same resignation. They have

indeed a kind of genius for impoverishment. A westerner has some difficulty in distinguishing between this poor woman who only yesterday was the owner of castles and forests, and that one for whom begging is not the result of a change in Government. I was shown in a filthy tea shop a scholar who looked like a blacksmith out of work. This cigarette seller, so shy and smiling, rather awkward under the handkerchief which binds her head, is a Princess G——. That beggar, stern and upright, with a fixed look, holding his open palm against his body so as not to say that he has stretched it out, once owned the finest horses in the Empire.

But these gloomy-looking holiday makers, who hang about the auction room and the bars by night, where were they yesterday? Were they fighting for the proletarian cause? Why, I would bet that most of them would have got away if they had had the means to do so. By this I mean that those who have gained by the Revolution are not to be met among the men who promoted it. The 'righteous' realized that when they fought the N.E.P. But life was stronger than theory as it always is, and Kamenev, having got the 'scalp' of

Trotsky and his followers, had in turn to yield to the undoubted fact that questions of finance cannot be solved as easily as questions of morality or psychology.

That was not the end of the Russian Revolution. It was the bankruptcy of Communism, to the advantage of a nationalist and anti-foreign rule, of an imperialism which tries its strength in the dark with haughty gestures, and which we shall have to unmask.

Let us go back to holy, dirty Moscow, into those fever-haunted streets with their persistent and special smell of sewers and incense. What do we see there? Life just as everywhere else, save for laughter. A sad and grievous change. These lighthearted people, who no longer know how to laugh, end by enjoying their weariness and sullen endurance.

Life went on, animated by countless forms with faces stone-set, beneath the domes and sky-scrapers. Here was the prison—what am I saying?—‘The Institute for deprivation of liberty.’ How forcible a phrase can be! ‘Words, words, words!’ said Hamlet. Do those gas-bags who are always insulting decorations know that in the U.S.S.R. ribbons are called

'signs of distinction'? A superintendent is an 'elder brother,' and the death penalty which has been suppressed is replaced by the 'greatest anguish,' which consists in separating the soul from the body.

Childishness? Hypocrisy? One can believe anything. An advertisement urged citizens to entrust their savings to the State. A money-box was displayed with a large question mark painted on the door. Beside it was this text: 'Instead of keeping your money at home, and leading a life of selfish pleasure, put your money here and your neighbour will never know how much you have.'

At the same time newspapers were announcing a lottery loan which would make a great many people millionaires, and they added 'Hearty congratulations!' In one of the Ministries (one of the most important) I have been addressed as 'good Barine'<sup>1</sup> by a commissionaire who asked for a tip, and who for the sake of a paper rouble rendered himself liable to be sent to the Soviet Siberia for speaking in this way the pure Tsarist tongue. Beneath their little

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<sup>1</sup> Name given to any local dignitary under pre-Revolutionary rule.—*Translator's Note.*

hats, with their capes and gnome-like beards, all the cabdrivers are, without exception, anti-revolutionists. With the aid of vodka they talk exactly like our hairdressers in the days of the Terror. And the astonished Soviets let them talk. Tolerance is the order of the day.

This is the difficulty. All must be born again, whatever the cost. A new birth is luxury and inequality—sables, a prize in a lottery, beggars on the threshold of expensive supper rooms. Such is Moscow, 1925. Go back to the days of class war, that is to famine. Such was Moscow, 1920.

I said to one of the authorities, ‘ You have not put down money or misery, the profiteers or the poor, or the greediness of one class and the long-suffering of the other. What have you put down then ? ’

The man, the people’s commissary, gave me a sad look, with stray gleams in his eyes.

‘ Nothing,’ he replied.

CHAPTER X  
COMRADE KAMENEV'S  
CIGARETTES

I HAD no interviews with anyone; I just talked things over. One day I asked Monsieur Kamenev:

'What do you think of the pictures which French Communists have painted of Soviet life?'

'I don't think anything about it, I don't know anything. I never read the *Humanity*.<sup>1</sup> I haven't the time.'

Here was a good answer, an excellent answer. Just the sort that journalists receive with delight and a certain amount of care, like rare blossoms.

Monsieur Kamenev thrust in front of me two mahogany boxes very simply made, in which were two rows of cigarettes; on the left

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<sup>1</sup> A French newspaper extremely radical in politics.  
—*Translator's Note.*



Caucasian, on the right Crimean. My host smoked both kinds without stopping. He was a sturdy, clean-cut fellow and looked like a business man. He was the only correctly dressed man that I have ever met in Moscow.

Kamenev is indisputably the most important man of the U.S.S.R., President of the Sto, Head of three ministries and Mayor of Moscow, and when he stares you in the face with his piercing greyish eyes to tell you 'My good sir, we have to govern a very large country,' you realize very thoroughly that if Marxism has not been able to object to a resumption of business, the International does not hinder nationalism from prospering. I do not reproach Monsieur Kamenev for his patriotism—far from it. Nor do I reproach him for his internationalism. My charge against him is for being a patriot in Moscow and a man of very humane feeling beyond the Soviet frontiers.

He did not take my remark in a very kindly spirit. 'You Latins and Westerners,' he said, 'refuse to understand that the Third International and the Soviet Government are two different things.'

'What's that you say?' I exclaimed. 'Why, we understand it wonderfully well. The duty

of the International is to spread, in the west, anti-militaristic ideas. The Soviet Government shoots offhand anyone who tries to corrupt the Red Guards.'

'That old story of Morocco again?'

'Yes, that old story once more.'

'It isn't true. We did not work against French interests in Morocco.'

'You are sure about that?'

'Certainly I am.'

'Neither you nor international Communism?'

'Oh, come, we must make a distinction between them. I have just told you——'

'I have not forgotten. Your right hand, which is the Government and responsibility, does not know what your left hand, which is doctrine and internationalism, is doing. These two hands are both yours, my dear Kamenev, since you are the chief in the Soviet as well as the chief in the party. Just a moment. I will put the question to you in another way. What would you do if the French Ambassador in Moscow welcomed and encouraged Russian citizens plotting to seize power in your place after having shot you down?'

Monsieur Kamenev did not answer; he offered

me more cigarettes and waited for the conclusions of my argument. I went on unsparingly.

‘At the Soviet Embassy in Paris I met one of my colleagues, Monsieur A. D., the editor of a paper which states every day that the time is drawing near for the government to be shot down and for one or two million citizens to be massacred at the same time. What do you think of these two pictures? Do they not pair off admirably?’

‘No.’

‘Indeed!’

‘No. In Paris the man you are speaking of belongs to the Communist Party officially acknowledged by France. In Moscow a non-Soviet citizen is looked upon as an anti-revolutionist, and——’

‘I understand. Have you not got at the Præsidium a certain Gorenfloff? He must be related to a Frenchman named Gorenflot, and have learnt from him the art of eating sucking pig in Lent, rechristened sturgeon. A cigarette, please.’

Monsieur Kamenev could scarcely help smiling.

Then we talked of other matters. For

instance, I had told him that in the streets of Moscow my blue burberry was looked upon with an astonishment mixed with disgust, and that people called out 'Dirty Bourgeois!' because of such disgraceful elegance. 'Now I come to think of it,' I added, 'you, Monsieur Kamenev, are dressed just as I am. Can you then be a dirty bourgeois?'

'Never as long as I live, either you or I.' At that point I thought that the moment had come to ask Lenin's successor quite good-humouredly a short and very simple question.

'What is a bourgeois?'

Well, truth obliges me to state that this simple question, this mere nothing, greatly embarrassed Monsieur Kamenev. He coughed, blushed, pressed a button and answered me according to formula, 'I will send for the "Constitution."'

I urged him not to do so. In my view—in the opinion of all the 'little citizens' from the west—his own definition was worth more than the Soviet Prika on the limitation of the right of voting which he proposed to read to me or than the well-known phrasing of the 'Manifesto of 1848.' I persuaded him to have done with his ringings. Besides, no one answered the bell.

'Well then,' retorted Kamenev, 'that's really quite easy to answer. A bourgeois is an exploiter.'

I looked like a man fallen from the clouds.

'Exploiter?' said I. 'You've still got them, in spite of the Revolution?'

'Come, now, said the President of the Sto, 'you know that well enough. We have not been able to abolish all exploiting, nor make all salaries equal. We are in a period of transition. It is certain, alas! that in no way whatever have we put Communism into practice.

'The Communists, then, are the opposition party?'

'No, they are the power. The proletariat exercises complete control, and my point is that state capitalism, citizen rule in citizen hands, becomes a revolutionary rule simply because it is passing into the hands of peasants and workers.'

'We will talk of that later. But with regard to wages, I have gone so far as to state that at Baku manual labourers earn eighteen roubles a month and skilled engineers 180 roubles.'

'We can't give everybody 180 roubles.'

'No; on the other hand, you could give each man eighteen roubles. At any rate, that would

be one way of carrying out the ideal of equality which inspired the Revolution.'

'It is nowhere written that manual work ought to be the equal in value of brain work.'

'There is a premium on intelligence, then?'

'Yes.'

'On instruction?'

'Of course.'

'I am glad that I have got you to admit it. But, by this system, what becomes of the proletarian, the man whose fate is to be one of the masses, the great numbers whose lives are given up to manual labour? What becomes of him with his eighteen roubles? Poor dictator! He must be tired of doing away with those officials who are, it is true, his "fellows," but who earn twenty times as much as he does, and feed fifty times better. Let us wager that just for a change the proletarian dictator would like to be someone with less cause for pride and more money in his pockets.'

'You're quite wrong. Our workers are waiting. They know what we shall do later on. People judge us too soon, and criticize us. But in twenty years they will see.'

'That's how every unsuccessful inventor talks.'

‘ I am speaking in all seriousness. It is quite true that neither at home nor abroad have we attained to Communism. But in twenty years, thirty years at the most, the evolution of the U.S.S.R. will be such as to be the model of Socialistic rule for the whole world.’

‘ Provided it is not an evolution in the opposite direction, and that you have not become by that time a federation of conservative states forming a buffer country between Asia and a Europe redder than even you are. I am not jesting either. Monsieur Herriot has appointed Monsieur Krassin as a member of your Cabinet—in twenty years time. And Herriot said : “ In twenty years it will be seen whether you have kept the most or we have gained the most.” ’

‘ Time will show,’ said he.

‘ But,’ said I, ‘ supposing that in twenty years we are the red, will you bourgeois send us ambassadors ? ’

All I heard was a loud laugh, falling like a cascade, the tones of which died away, as I came down the staircase steps.

## CHAPTER XI

### MUSCOVITE BOMBS

THE bombs I refer to are those whose bursts are merely the pops of corks; *pienisty*, *schaumwein*—or champagne. This chapter might also be called Montmartre and Moscow.

A married couple? Yes, and a sad one too—gloomy, anxious, a couple of gay-livers hard up, seeking for their past life in a country where memory is an offence. Shall I say that people enjoy themselves? I have promised not to embroider the facts. Let us say, without more ado, that they try not to die of Red boredom, which exceeds the dreariness of a Scotch sabbath just as the steppe is longer than the parson's sermon.

But are they, then, allowed to make merry in Moscow? It is forbidden without being stopped—well, at any rate, it is forbidden. But the bars are open every evening except Monday. They are closed on that evening



because Monday is the day of rest for the Soviet of Jazz-players.

Night clubs, then, are allowed; in their smoky, patched-up caverns they have preserved an old-world atmosphere—nine years old, that ought to be bottled, labelled, stamped and sealed—the Tsarist atmosphere.

Does the Soviet rule permit this to go on? It has had to do so. Moscow has a million inhabitants; you can do anything with a million people anxious about to-morrow's breakfast, anything—except destroy the illusion of pleasure. Even under the Terror the Bolsheviki kept the theatres open; with that resort and black bread they could go on. Now that less restricted times have come, the bread must be white and amusements multiplied. Thereupon, one after another, the cabarets opened, and when people complained, the excuse was given which under every rule the exploiting of mere amusement affords the moralist, 'It gives so many people a living.'

As far as Moscow is concerned, nothing is so true. You have only to see those nights in the Tverskaïa, which becomes after midnight a sort of Rue Pigalle without its illuminated signs. Everything goes on in a murky darkness in

which black figures pursue each other silently, and invisible and numberless coachmen shout for fares, whilst all the horses of the Valkyrie seem to be prancing over the pavement with echoing hoofs.

But a demon of melancholy presides over the dance. Here, as everywhere else in the Soviet country, laughter is dead ; it seems as though the old have taken it away with them to the tomb in arms stiff with fury and hunger. The result is a state of affairs difficult to express—people rioting with faces set like stone. Here self-indulgence has acquired a sort of dignity. But it is a gloomy sight and one that quickly disappoints you.

Doubtless no one will be surprised that a Frenchman should have hung about these cabarets. Besides, the round is quickly made. There is the ' Bar ' not far off, but in a different quarter of the town, the only pleasure-haunt where politicians, future officials or members of the Party are to be met. There is the *Nedved* (' Bear '), very fashionable and where the most alluring cocottes in Moscow are to be seen ; the *Praga* with its strange lights ; the *Kroujok* (' Circle ') where you have to be ' introduced ' ; the *Philipov*, a sort of eating house,

huge, barelooking and as draughty as a station refreshment room ; there a wild-looking orchestra gives forth moanings of brass, comrade waiters upset beer over people's trousers and the company consists of workers out for a spree, anxious-looking foreigners and police agents who never stir. At the *Sad Ermitage* you get a faint illusion of being in the Champs-Elysées.

In almost all of them a flight of steps has to be descended to reach the basement. On the ground floor is a buffet with the customary *sakuska*, the Russian's *hors d'œuvre* at every hour of the day and night. Downstairs are the music and the players. They are of the familiar type. Those who managed to escape from Moscow are in Constantinople, Berlin or Rome—and the Rue de Douai. Their bows play on your nerves, tears seem to be falling from their violins, while the sounds they make are as much like music as a fakir taken up in a trance is like a flying man. They have the languishing, unnatural tones of the ridiculous. You realize their possible effect in Russia, combined with that 'taste of misery' after eight years of Soviet rule.

There is no real difference between one

cabaret and another. Merely haggard-looking couples, or so excited that they seem repulsive. The music moans and blares. At every table State vodka is drunk down in one gulp. Eyes roll till they disappear. Parties of three, four or five sit there, in which the men begin to give each other looks like tender-hearted hangmen.

‘Comrade, some more vodka?’

‘Papirosses, my dears?’ asks an old woman whom you would think you must have met the other evening in Leicester Square.

The girls sit at their tables; they don’t dance. They fix their man with the bold and simple glance of ashen-coloured eyes, with bright blue gleams. Then people come round with dying pigs, dolls and jointed fish to sell. Yet nobody laughs. One evening a tipsy *Nedved* (German) began to beat the time of a foxtrot with a spoon. Everybody got up. The German stopped and the diners devoted themselves once more to their voluptuous misery.

About half-past two you go upstairs into the daylight, for the day is breaking—a lovely, rosy-hued morn. The only beautiful thing about Moscow night life is this mingling of the artificial trimmings of night and the freshness

of dawn so much earlier than at our western hours, when faces beautiful by night show only harsh features, dullened eyes and cracking paint. Pleasure in Russia has only just begun and already it is day. Fancy Piccadilly at eight o'clock crowded out with lively merry-makers.

Innumerable cabs, whose existence could till now only be imagined by the sound of their horses' hoofs, draw up in the cheerful light of day. Couples still smoking embrace, horses start or get in each other's way, all the drivers are shouting. Night watchmen wake up on the steps of the shops. A few working people go by, thoughtful and frowning. They are doubtless trying to find an explanation of these scandalous goings-on in the last harangues of the People's Commissaries. They cannot find it and content themselves with looking spitefully at these revellers and their companions in their pink dresses.

And then come the beggars. What beggars they are, too! The reservoir of horrors has burst. The court of monstrosities pours in torrents down the Tverskaia. They are woeful, eager or abusive. They swarm almost into one's pockets.

‘ Good stranger, a farthing. Just the price of a mouthful of food, little brother.’

The crowd thickens—then seems to disappear, while the night revellers turn to the right into the alleys of Petrovsky. They reach the Troubnaïa Square where are two beer shops haunted by the underworld, dark traps, where Red slang is spoken and those who at all times and in all places have escaped wars and revolutions are kings. There the column of beggars forms up again. They grow bolder. The ladies of the supper parties take fright and throw them copper coins. It’s silver they want. The ‘Terrors’ appeared at the shop door fronts beside their fair-haired companions. Another day has come. Already the pavements are being watered. Police go up and down on their beat. But beggars, shaking their fists at the patrons of the Government bars, shout at the top of their lungs : ‘ It’s us beggars who’ll make the real revolution. We’ll make it, little brothers, we’ll make it, the *real* one.’

CHAPTER XII  
*PETERSBURG, THE DYING  
CITY*

‘ We should have to undermine Petrograd and blow the whole place up with dynamite.’ ‘ And would you not regret Petrograd, Comrade Vorontsov ? ’ I asked, lost in admiration of this proletariat boldness, ‘ What is there to regret ? ’—Léon Trotsky : *Lenin*, p. 188.

**L**ENINGRAD, Petrograd, has it not even a name now ? Russia still says, ‘ Peters. It is Petersburg that is dying—a past age of greatness in a worn-out and haggard present. Let us say Petersburg with sad, devoted hearts.

Everything is silence and rubbish heaps. The last sound which echoed in the finest avenues in the world was the sound of melinite. For eight years fragments of stone and rubbish have kept alive the memory of those terrible days. A sickly-looking grass has grown up. From the top of his rock Peter the Great, astride his horse, looks at the cold waves of that Neva on

which he, the old Peter, saw the Baltic sailors come singing in to destroy the Imperial Docks.

This desert and this pomp are indescribable. Side by side, palaces are crumbling on to the pavement. The black chains that divided them have broken. Sea winds rush in under the porches and their gusts fill the courtyards with a moaning that is almost like a human voice. Stone by stone, the fronts of the Admiralty are wearing away. As he wanders silently among this vast suffering, the passer-by hastens away, his ears echoing with the sound of his own footsteps.

Petersburg is dead. Involuntarily one thinks of the ruins which wars of centuries have made elsewhere. All that was wanted here was a day of wrath and eight years of despair. I wandered far along these avenues and by the riverside. Already the day was passing. From the foot of their columns the palaces were fast disappearing in the shadows, and the last gleams of a summer evening showed up, in all their wretchedness, falling buttresses, sightless windows and broken roofs. Nowhere else in the world can be seen a sadness such as this. Towns that have been bombarded are different; you see them twisted, pounded, crushed,



scorched by an iron hand. But that is war. No devastation touches the heart like that slow wearing down in which what was St. Petersburg is decaying. In Moscow you see a country young, brave, determined, with head down, prepared for the fight. At Petersburg you see Russia on her deathbed.

The palaces are no more, like the nobles who once (eight years ago) lived in them. Some have been struck down, others condemned to the cruellest death, deserted by men, while the common people laughed. I say the common people—we must not blame the Russian proletariat, so eager to love, to understand and to save what is worthy of its cares.

But the people are elsewhere—in the factories and in the clubs. Between them and the noble end of Synod, Senate, and the Archives, there stretches every day a curtain of words, thickly meshed and which no light can penetrate.

Doubtless the men who condemned Petersburg imagined its destruction useful for the future of mankind. All revolutions have these fancies, and was it not our own Lyons,<sup>1</sup> the

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<sup>1</sup> Called 'free' after its insurrection against the Convention had been brutally suppressed in 1793.—*Translator's Note.*

'Free City,' which desired to lay the land waste? But Collot d'Herbois<sup>1</sup> believed, in the simplicity of those bygone ages, that only the pick-axe can hack away a great city. Those who destroyed Petersburg have taught us that time can do so and that he carries out his task quickly. Eight years—not even the months required to make a child into a man. Those naked, sad-looking children bathing in the Neva may have seen the fronts of these palaces in all their pride. And to think that, *had men so wished*, this disaster would not be irreparable; utter downfall does not come readily in the country of work; strong arms are not lacking nor goodwill. In what name was that done? I am looking for an answer. I have not got the courage to go and ask it from Comrade Zinoviev. His reply makes me almost afraid.

Not far from these quays, in fact about three hundred yards, the terraces of the Evropeïskaïa Gastinitza (Hôtel de l'Europe) rise up, where every evening musicians may be heard under

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<sup>1</sup> Collot d'Herbois (1750-96); Member of the Public Safety, and instigator of many heartless massacres.—*Translator's Note.*

arcades of flowers and rows of lights. All the gaiety in the whole of Russia seems to have taken refuge there. Fair-haired diners swoon to the musicians' languishing strains. From this side and that the Jazz Band discharges over the company a western stream. They dance, laughing hysterically. I look around and for the first time hear laughter.

The waiters—where were they rediscovered?—are swarthy-looking Tartars who, gliding like ghosts among this revelry by night, tread furtively over the lawns with hangmen's looks. A man seated alone at a table beneath a pergola is singing. And roubles are flying.

Look round you here, comrades, for the stern face of the plebeian conqueror such as is described in an English gathering in Victoria Park. All I see are girls and profiteers, whose diversions dominate a town, overcome by a mournful slumber. On the horizon the smoke of Poutiloff is glowing—at the end of the Rue des Grèves, where the barricades of 1919 were set up.

Is that what they call rebirth? Yes, if they choose to do so. But viewed from here, how far off seems Lenin's tomb and how feeble the echo of his words: 'Comrades, the capitalists

set up the tyranny of certain rich men ; they share the whole world between them and keep down hundreds of millions of individuals, while they take for themselves the best part of the booty.' A dead man's words.

A holiday in Petersburg, a dance of death. While the short Russian night was passing away, I thought of the vanity of doctrines, the misery of political despotism. Agents in motor-cars come from France, Germany or Italy, trying to sell their high speed limousines to the wealthy in a government of equals. The day breaks over these bargainings, a lovely morning, pale violet-hued. Beneath the terraces all are asleep ; a violin sighs. The tune evokes in the eyes of each man the ecstasy of the past found again. Women stagger and pale. Little by little daylight dims the brightness of the many-coloured lamps. Now it is a trembling day, a light betwixt dawn and night, that awakens the flowers. The violin sobs over the ruins. Petersburg is dying to the strains of music, whilst, over all, a crescent moon summons the east to take its part in incense, haggling and corpses—a moon which is thrust aside at the birth of day by the Red star, the hope of the poor, the last beacon of human aspirations.

## CHAPTER XIII

### MOSCOW'S EYES AND EARS

HERE was I back at Moscow. A couch, the scarlet cushions of Scheherazade, a samovar of dirty-looking silver, and Lenin's bust.

It was a very pretty woman who, seated beside me, talked and talked and talked. She had eyes which, in the words of the poet, 'would give God lessons in innocence.' Her words were like a gentle stream where the *r's* rolled like pebbles in a waterfall.

'You have come from Paris? I am glad to see you here; I am happy, so happy. Sit down close to me. It's such a long time since I was in France. I am very young, you say? That is true. Before the Revolution I was seventeen and already I was thinking of getting a divorce from my husband, as I came back, you might say, from our honeymoon. After the October days it was quite easy to divorce. I have done it three times. You must not ask

a woman in this country nowadays why she marries one man and then another and then another. I think I am going to be very fond of you.

‘ I want a papirosse. You might give me a light. Thank you. Are you still smiling? I hate you. You French people are the only people who smile in Moscow. What do you think of our country and our Government? I am a Sovietist, you know, heart and soul. The Bolsheviks took everything we had—money, the villa, the room. Well, that’s quite all right. I am a Communist fast enough, if they force me to work. And you? Are you a Communist? You know one need only be sympathetic—that’s quite enough.

‘ Ah, your eyes are laughing, you gay dog of a Frenchman. I ought to have guessed—you are a bourgeois! You are all bourgeois with your savings, your umbrellas, your stiff-fronted shirts and decorations in your buttonhole. Even your Communists out there are like our Whites. They sing the International in Parliament, but if you have supper with them they try and look like heroes and tell you about the War, how brave they were and what medals they’ve got. A cigarette—yes, go on giving me

them. Oh, an "Eltete" if you please, not a Bosnian. *Merci bien. Je l'aime beaucoup.* I speak four languages, not counting Persian, which is my mother tongue. I am a Tartan, you know, from Chemakha in the Caucasus. I hate Moscow and these Russians. What about yourself? Why don't you answer me? I shall be angry in a minute.

'Make yourself comfortable. Is it true that in the Parliament in Paris there are two bells, a great big one to shut up the Bolshevik members and a little silver one to shut up the Bourgeois? It's true, isn't it, that Léon Blum always speaks in a frockcoat or smoking jacket? You don't tell me what does go on.

'Our Revolution did away with lying. What's the good of lying? We don't own anything—we can't own anything. No one cares the least bit about us. So one has no need to tell lies. Isn't that a good thing? Oh, it's naughty of you not to answer, and your eyes are naughty too—they're laughing at me. You don't like our Revolution. You don't like it.'

She called herself a Persian. She was really Jewish. She was like a cat with eyes whose pupils jealousy sometimes dilates like an angry

shadow. On a table in her room were the 'sakuska,' a lot of cold dishes, like the French fashion at the time of the Restoration. People keep coming in for a snack and going out again.

'You don't say anything,' went on the lady on the sofa, angrily.

Yes, indeed I meant to say something, anything—if only for the pleasure of picturing her under her paint, with her imitation pearls, her paste combs, her scarlet silk dress and her cat-like eyes—seeing her, I say, get out of her carriage in the Loubianska Square, in front of an immense building which no night prowler passes by. We should see her—our soft-hearted little lady so full of questions—going in under a porch guarded by two Red sentinels like monuments (such as you see on the back of a coin), with Mongolian helmets and comfortably resting against the cornices as becomes mythological characters. We should leave her to go in all alone, secretive and anxious. Better not follow her. Behind this unseeing front with its carved warriors is the Guépéou. That means the Government Police. It takes the place of the Tchéka of hateful memory.

Night grew apace; we went back to our room at the hotel.



There was no one for us to disturb. I mean that at this late hour the daily visits to suit-cases, trunks, locked attaché cases, books, tables and bolsters are over. And if it amused you to do so, you could search for their traces.

Have you any faith in the efficacy of locks? Well, go to Moscow and you will come back cured of an illusion. There is no clever combination of bolt and key which does not yield to the cunning, quiet thrust of an Asiatic hand. Everything is observed, everything read and known. Consequently the envelopes of letters that have come from the west have worn quite thin in a wonderful and very convenient way by the time they are about to reach their destination.

Beware of that porter, the only man in the hotel who does not speak a treacherous word of our language. He is probably the man who understands it the best. Distrust that old coachman. With his crushed-looking beard, his cap askew, his thick ulster, his back bent like an old drunkard's, and the cigarette end in his mouth, he will steadily drive on the overtalkative Frenchman, and what he hears will not be lost. Don't trust the loafer who comes and stands beside you at the shop window;

or that man at the restaurant reading the 'Pravda'; or that musical enthusiast at a concert beating time with his foot and humming the tunes. Do not confide, without careful thought, in that polite grey-headed interpreter. Of all the agents of the U.S.S.R. he is the most annoying, for he is the one who is watching you at your own expense.

As for the telephone, I think that the Soviets have extended the use of this instrument simply for the convenience and simplification of Government spying. At the Guépéou the telephone box ought to be a banqueting table for a thousand guests, quite a feast! When accounts are settled up it costs far less than those strolling agents, pseudo-casuals, humbugging loafers whom Moscow seems gradually to be giving up. But 'Society folk,' servants, experts in receiving telephone messages and the countless ears of the Central Exchange—all that apparently is not enough.

There are the microphones. In the two or three hotels of Moscow I do not think that a single guest's room is without one. For my own part I have noticed that the openings in the central heating, which in my room had been installed about nine feet from the floor, were

sometimes open and sometimes shut. In the middle of August that seemed a good deal of energy to be expended on a heating apparatus.

However, life in Moscow goes on in a silent eddy which nothing can hasten or retard. The visitor learns to hold his tongue. But the Muscovite has long been accustomed to keeping his mouth shut. He gives his confidences to the hard, cold, silent ikon which welcomes all confidences—that image so ready to comfort and whose candles the Red Guards dared not extinguish even in the fiercest days of the Revolution.

## CHAPTER XIV

### *THE ASSASSIN*

I MET him at a doctor's who introduced us to each other. The man admitted that he was an agent of the Tchéka.<sup>1</sup> Doubtless he was rather more than that. He admitted that his duties took him on to the execution ground where thousands of people were put to death without a trial. The agent arrested. Chinese and Letts did the rest.

It was after having shaken hands with this man that I got to know his past history. He was seated opposite me in a rocking-chair near the samovar. The doctor's wife was pouring out his tea ; he was being offered in his turn the 'sakuska' and the cigarette boxes. He was admitted into the company as an ordinary acquaintance, the usual type of man whom it is quite natural that one should know.

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<sup>1</sup> Terrorist Police, succeeded in 1922 by the Guépéou.

In fact, seeing him in this way he was just like anybody else except that his manner was rather more gentle. His lips showed kindness as also did his slightly stooping shoulders. His eyes had that childlike clearness characteristic of that true cruelty which shows neither joy nor pity—a fanatic's cruelty for its own sake. Eyes like the Duke of Alva's<sup>1</sup> or those of the young parricides to be seen at Belle-Isle.<sup>2</sup> Above them was a flat brow that sank straight down to the level of the ears ; you would have said that his communistic faith and his zeal in playing hangman had dropped on to the top of his head like bricks. He gave his opinion without any emotion, being quite convinced in his beliefs.

How many of the ' bourgeois ' had he made away with ? He probably did not know himself. He only recollected gruesome executions, as for instance that of an old man who wanted to buy a canary, the last fancy of his wife in her anguish ; at that time any useless expenditure soon attracted attention. He spoke of

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<sup>1</sup> In 1567 the Spanish Duke of Alva suppressed the Dutch risings with appalling brutality.—*Translator's Note.*

<sup>2</sup> An island off the west coast of France ; the state prison is at Le Palais.—*Translator's Note.*

that incident without shame or pride. He simply said :

‘ Sometimes we had to beat prisoners to get confessions out of them.’

‘ No ? ’ said I.

‘ Yes.’

He crossed his hands over his knees and told his story in his level tones, raising his eyebrows as if to ask, ‘ What are you surprised at ? ’

The salvation of Russia was at stake. ‘ On the thrice holy Russia, fire ! ’ as the ‘ songs of democracy ’ used to chant. And so for four years this terribly calm man was able to go to prisons where whole families were screaming and waving their arms without any other feeling than the satisfaction of an intriguing mind. Was there nothing—never a heart searching or fear or hesitation ?

Yes, once. That was his reason for coming to the doctor. On one occasion, on a morning of the second winter, he had to take to the wall an old lady who kept on all the way weeping and begging him for mercy. She was afraid to die. At one moment she fell on her knees and so far forgot herself as to seize the man’s hand and kiss it, begging for pity. He had to raise her up and get on. She obeyed him,

sobbing. But then he noticed that she was like his own mother. All the same he had her shot. Since that time she had haunted him. He could not put her out of his life; she was always confronting him walking backwards before him. He could not sleep or do his work.

People told him that it was remorse. He answered violently, 'No, I am ill. I feel no remorse. If I had to do it again, I should. But, doctor, do save me from this vision.'

Medicine tried to cut the invisible membrane which bound together that dead woman and that living man, victim and murderer.

While he was talking the rest of the company were drinking tea. More than ten people were present. I thought of the feelings of grief and horror that such a guest would have instantly inspired at one of our own parties. I wondered what sort of a monster was Monsieur Djerjinski, this man's chief, formally the head of the Tchéka, and said to be the most ruthlessly cruel man in the whole of Russia. I thought of a past so terrible, so recent, thus acknowledged. It occurred to me that nowhere since my arrival in Moscow had I heard any talk of those shootings, those prolonged butcheries, those human slaughter houses, those murders in the

prison corridors. Over all that was a silence deep as the folds of a shroud—forgetfulness.

I felt distressed about this amazing silence, until I reviewed in my mind the history of Russia. It is as full of such stupid bloodshed as the massacre of the Stryelsky,<sup>1</sup> and the thirty thousand of Suvarov.<sup>2</sup> And it is all a story of only yesterday in the eyes of slow, eternal Russia. There have been heads on the spikes on each battlement of the huge Kremlin. If it is true that what their fathers have seen returns in troubled images to the minds of the sons, every one of them might have recognized, in the horrors of those times (which the great Dimitri Merejkowsky calls the 'Reign of Anti-Christ'), some very old acquaintances. 'Does Red Russia frighten you?' says the poet. No, not particularly. 'Well, wait. White Russia will be far more terrible.' 'The iron heating in the flame' says 'Enough. I am now red.' But the fire answers, 'Wait a while. You will

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<sup>1</sup> The revolt of the Tsar's musketeers (Stryelsky) was put down with ruthless severity in 1698 by Peter the Great.—*Translator's Note.*

<sup>2</sup> Alexander Suvarov (1729–1800), a distinguished Russian Field-Marshal; he suppressed Pugachev's rising (1775). See p. 126.—*Translator's Note.*



be white.' Bah! Merejkowsky is all wrong. No horror, I think, can keep these people ever eager for the fight. They fall back upon their love of unhappiness, their fondness for forgiving.

As it was getting late, I took my leave. That was done according to the Muscovite ceremonial. Only, when I came before the man from the Tchéka, I pretended not to see his outstretched hand. He drew it back, without, however, being the least disconcerted. After all, I was merely a westerner. But I felt that everybody, in this party, where there were not three Communists, disapproved of my action. All were living in the present. 'What can one do with what is past?'

I went out, accompanied by a friend. We walked for a little without a word. In front of a brilliantly lit shop we stopped. A Lenin in porcelain was looking at us. 'Why did you pretend not to see his hand?' asked my companion.

'Why?'

'He is an unhappy man.'

I could restrain myself no longer. 'You Russians,' I exclaimed, 'don't remember bloodshed.'

'How true that is,' he answered calmly.

And he took me on towards the Hermitage.<sup>1</sup> It was a warm evening. We walked between two rows of women selling cigarettes, most of them society ladies in the old days, widows of murdered men. And in every eye was forgetfulness. No, they do not remember bloodshed.

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<sup>1</sup> A once fashionable resort of Moscow.—*Translator's Note.*

## CHAPTER XV

### *THE SPECTRE OF THE TSAR*

RAIN was falling. We stumbled on through the village from rut to rut. The half-open door of an isba<sup>1</sup> settled it. We went in. A swarm of flies greeted us. After them, past the second door, all was warm-smelling darkness. Feeble gleams revealed the ikon, a commonplace zinc ikon, one of those manufactured by the score in the province of Wladimir. Still, I went up to have a look at it close at hand and experienced a great surprise.

On the left of the holy image was the most unexpected thing in the world. Nailed on the partition of the rough woodwork was a portrait of Tsar Nicholas II. I rubbed my eyes. What was this? Only 50 miles from Moscow—only an hour in an armoured car from the

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<sup>1</sup> Cottage.

Guépéou! Only three days before Soviet justice had deported the families of students shot for 'anti-revolutionary propaganda.' Yes, so it is. Such is Russia.

Our astonishment may be imagined. The cottager, still suspicious, said not a word. We looked for an explanation. After all, this portrait of the last Romanoff, the front page of a popular magazine, was not displayed there merely as an ornament. You see quite different kinds in our countries.

Meanwhile, the peasant, setting a pitcher of milk on the table, began to warm up the samovar. He was watching us. Doubtless our appearance as strangers and Frenchmen reassured him, for he soon set at rest his doubts about us. When my guide asked him if he had not been formerly the village headman, he turned towards us a face, harsh, tanned and wrinkled, with half-closed eyes in which, however, a keen glance was burning. 'Let us talk, little brother,' said he.

So saying he lit with much satisfaction a cigarette which I had offered him. Then, with the corner of his eye and a slight raising of his shoulder, he pointed at the Tsar's image nailed on to the woodwork, and crossing him-

self murmured the old Slav proverb, 'Heaven is high, the Tsar is far away.' He did not say a word more. Silently we drank the tea. The rain stopped and we took our leave. Just as we stooped down to pass under the doorway of the first room, we heard the peasant's voice whispering, '*He is not dead.*'

Throughout the whole of Russia that same whisper is heard. It sweeps over deserted fields, follows along sandy roads and goes from hamlet to hamlet to give birth to the legend so dear to the hearts of these simple easterners: 'The Tsar is not dead.' This faith in the miraculous, which preserves the crowned head from the blows of murderers, is as old as Russia herself. Since there are Tsars and Tsarevitchs who meet with untimely fates, a people faithful and incredulous alike still awaits the return of the resurrected. That has always happened and the Naundorffs<sup>1</sup> of Moscow had always a good time of it. What processions of fanatics followed the two Dimitri<sup>2</sup> Pretenders!

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<sup>1</sup> Karl Naundorff pretended (1814) to be the murdered Louis XVII.

<sup>2</sup> They professed to be the sons of Ivan the Terrible who had died very young.—*Translator's Note.*

And compared with the adventure of Emelyan Pugachev<sup>1</sup> who passed himself off as Peter III, what mattered the Tsar murdered by the lovers of his wife, Catherine the Great? Pugachev raised up an army and, surrounded with monks, himself attired as a hermit with a bishop's cross in his hand, reached the very gates of Moscow, after having stirred up 2000 miles of country.

If the Romanoffs tried to return one day, it would be through the back door of a convent.

Would that be possible? Though the experiment of Sovietism has proved disillusioning, would Russia go so far as to forget the cancer of the former rule, the knout, the gallows, the bribery, the famines deliberately organized, the debauchery of the upper classes and the immorality of the court? Shall we see after so few months a false Nicholas III come forth, before the real claimants have time to do so? Truth to tell, everything goes to make that likely, and, first of all, the absolute refusal

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<sup>1</sup> A Cossack who conspired in 1773 against the Empress Catherine.—*Translator's Note.*

which the Bolsheviks maintain in supplying the death certificates of the Imperial Family. The thing that came to pass in November, 1918, in the cellars of Ekaterinenburg already belongs rather to legend than to history. No one has ever spoken of those who performed that act of blood. The Government has told one hundred and forty million Russians 'there is no longer a Tsar'—not a word more than that. What an error of judgment!

Is it conceivable that that statement has been accepted as true to the furthest ends of the Empire? Only recently two American journalists travelling in the Pamir<sup>1</sup> met some Uzbegs and Tajiks,<sup>2</sup> who asked them if the Empress' party was still the most influential at Court. In the course of his travels in the south President Kalinin, on his way to rouse the peasants to work, was frequently taken for the new Tsar. In certain parts of Trans-Caucasia the soldiers thought that he was the Army Chief—like Nicholas's own ancestor, the Grand Duke Constantine—and they cried out to him,

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<sup>1</sup> A vast territory south of Russian Turkestan.

<sup>2</sup> The former are Iranjans of E. Persia, the latter Turco-Tartars in E. Turkestan.—*Translator's Note.*

‘If you need us, little father, we will serve you faithfully.’

Moreover, the story goes that at the moment when the murder was to be committed a false Tsar had been substituted for Nicholas Alexandrovitch. The Maximalists, it was said at the time, wanted to use Nicholas as a hostage in dealing with the western courts where sovereigns related to the Romanoffs were considering an armed intervention. Is it all nonsense, mere dreams? They express the persistent illusion of a people who have doubtless remained faithful, more so than is supposed, to the blood of Peter the Great. In that respect the peasant who lives in the heart of Red Russia is very near to the most distant refugee. Not only the Tsarists of Belgrade but also the readers of the royalist press in Berlin, those who rallied to the cry of ‘Change of Road,’ have a confused belief in the survival of the Tsar. I say nothing about our nightly dreamers in the cabarets of Montmartre. There is no need to rouse the Russian soul to great heights to bring it to a longing for the miraculous. The ghost of the Tsar may rise up to-morrow in twenty million hearts. It would probably only be necessary for some impostor to meet



one evening, beside the Seine, the Thames or the Spree, some former official of Tsarkoi Selo and for the latter to say, 'If the Emperor Nicholas II were not dead, I should imagine that I saw him again in yourself.'

And many a Peter the Hermit would then go forth and carry the news from province to province. It has been very justly said that the policy of fugitives is a policy of mere phantasies. But imagination is reason in the head of a Russian. And all the peasants of Russia, kept down in dreary toil by the famous rising in those far-off times of the 'Sons<sup>1</sup> of Rurik' have but one thought, to shake off the yoke—light though it be—which weighs upon them.

Does this mean what is called a Restoration? No. Properly speaking there is no White Party in Russia. The towns hate the memory of Tsarism; the countryside hopes for a new distribution of lands—they will go on wishing for it to the end of centuries, that new distribution of land. But both country and cities live in the same confused hope of forthcoming change.

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<sup>1</sup> Three brothers invited to found the Russian dynasty.—*Translator's Note.*

Neither Monsieur Tchitcherin nor Monsieur Kamenev, both of whom I saw, was able to deny the general discontent among the people.

It is true that the workman bitterly deceived is often grumbling, and that the peasant (who now represents a proportion of ninety-five per cent of agricultural labour) says loudly that he has only got a change of master. In any other country these feelings would find expression in a slow and heavy pressure on the Government. But Russia submits and dreams. Names of Tsars, which are names of saints, flit through her childlike mind. The Church, which the two revolutions have not been able to crush out, has no longer a head. At Petersburg the Holy Synod is crumbling, stone by stone, on to a grass-grown pavement before the very eyes of Peter the Great who built it. The most absurd societies buzz about and disappear, like swarms of insects around an extinguished light. There is in the air a sort of mystical unrest. The Soviets feel it; they give an order for God to be denied still more violently in the schools.

But what can be prophesied of the children? The future prophet of the religious renaissance may well grow up in the atheistic schools of the

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U.S.S.R. just as our chief anti-clericals came from the Seminary. Who knows? The future is hidden. Perhaps among those little girls who every day march along the Place de la Revolution to the beat of the drum behind the Red Flag we may, without knowing her, be looking at the Cavalière Elsa, who will one day lead the Bolshevik hordes over our own countries. But perhaps, too, among those dreamy boys who know how to chant the Gospel according to Karl Marx so perfectly there may already be found a man in an iron mask who will restore the descendants of Féodor the Pious to the throne of Holy Russia.

## CHAPTER XVI

### ' ON THE ROOF '

NEAR the Strastnoï Convent is a skyscraper, twelve floors high. On the top floor, in a sheltered spot, is a belvedere; beneath it a restaurant with terraces and cement balconies. It makes you feel giddy—like an airman at anchor above the smoke and domes of Moscow. You get quite a good dinner up there. The restaurant is called 'Na Kryché' (On the Roof). It is the meeting place for the Incroyables<sup>1</sup> of the Soviet Directoire, who are Jewish, like poetry, the one hundred and sixty-five branches of the state bank, the architecture of Lenin's tomb and the cabaret patrons.

Two of these gentlemen, whose names were Nathan and Zinovy, had invited me to dinner,

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<sup>1</sup> Aristocratic party after the French Revolution, opposed to Robespierre.—*Translator's Note.*

two careworn, all-powerful men, intolerant, easterners, clever and far-seeing—in a word, faithful in all respects to the genius of their race. We had had an exceedingly good dinner. After the bortch, pink and marbled like the dawn of a lovely day, I asked them :

‘ Gentleman, would you allow a stranger to ask you this question ? If you find it indiscreet, you need not answer. Is Communism, as is generally believed in France, a Jewish phenomenon ? ’

The one who speaks our language the better answered, ‘ No. In spite of the Jewish majority on the Komintern, Communism is not the business, is not a Jewish affair. As a proof, its failure.’

‘ What ! You admit the failure of Communism ! ’

‘ Whoever thinks of denying it *here* ? The spiritual side continues, the hope of fulfilment has been given up. I flatter myself that I have a certain amount of influence. I think that there cannot be a communistic rule in a country where eighty million peasants are law abiding. No, Communism has nothing to do with us. What is Jewish, comrade, is Sovietism. There are realities in that, things that are urgent and

important in quite a different way from the commandments of the Book of Marx.'

'You are aware that the Government of the U.S.S.R. says that neither it nor Communism is under the influence of Jews.'

'It denies everything—it's a method of self-defence, as if it needed protection! Is it not master in its own house, in the nation?'

'You mean, in the republics of the Union?'

I interrupted, stressing the plural.

My informant refixed his spectacles on the narrow bridge of his nose, looked keenly at me, and shrugged his shoulders.

'I said "the nation," the great country which has to be governed, which has been governed up till to-day in spite of you Europeans. But at what a cost! They have almost gone under. It has had to put up with everything—not only famine, which is a scourge of Jehovah, but patronizing charity, a regulated dole, from the real, the only enemy, the other young race, America! And why was all that? For the sake of broken-down fantasies, of which the "righteous" showed distant views to the rabbles of the west, crying "They live, they live. We are suffering, but we have gained all things—peace, the rule of the workers, the

International, and we can defy the old capitalist world." What childish talk and waste of time! Let these old foxes tell their lies to the old races, but for us Jews it is a fight all the time, what with the one party so sensible and the others who dream of hurling themselves on the world—these barbarians, fatalists, Talmudists, armed by the God of Battle with a sword reddened in the fire and which never grows cold. Is that not so, Zinovy?'

The other guest agreed gloomily. Since the first glass of vodka he had not spoken a word, being entirely absorbed in preparing for his palate a strange meal, floating butter in red wine, smearing cheese over the pears and sousing his meat with iced lemonade. The other continued:

'But there are also others, those who think as I do, who favour waiting patiently, penetrating into every country, who believe in the need of a strong U.S.S.R., a citadel stronger than ancient Russia—stronger one day than all the west.'

'Oh, you Nationalists!' I cried.

'Yes, little French bourgeois. Nationalists with an ideal far wider than the earth, yet Nationalists all the same. It was very kind

of us to take so much trouble, to tell you so many lies, merely to receive your interviewers at the end of it all. Come, do not go looking about you. Communism has gone bankrupt in Russia, we admit it. As for the hope of Revolution in the west, we have given up all thought of it. From now onward there'll be no more Soviets in France, England or Italy. Good. The reconstruction of Germany was our death-blow? All right. It is time to give up the struggle, the useless lies. The International is dead; the Komintern is now a mere catchword of Byzantines with red halos, an excuse for a tour in Russia, including a visit to the Kremlin. Good. Very good. But if we have to admit all our failures, let us try to attain material prosperity. We Russian Jews must take up the wise and far-reaching programmes of Trotsky which we have abandoned.'

'What, you?'

'Yes. Trotsky fell in a political struggle with the Jews, a synagogue fight. And the man whom you see here (he pointed to his companion) fought him tooth and nail, in the name of all those who still think to save the world by fire.'



Then the second Jew took up the story. He did not speak to me. 'How far have you got with your opportunism? I will tell you. You are on the eve of grovelling for the foreigner—the enemy—to resume business with you. Through whose fault, comrade? Through your own. You did not want to suffer any longer. Well, your return to capitalism obliges you to set up confidence instead of force. Do you think that that can be done at once? You have printed banknotes which are accepted in your towns because you have been careful to have the emblems on your flags gilded and keep your garrisons well clothed. But are you going to get this into the peasants' heads—that the gold rouble paper will not come to the same end as your rouble bonds, which he used to light his pipe with? He sniffs at your notes, he hesitates, won't have them. What he demands is the right to do a deal; his harvest for tools, seeds, clothing, give and take. If he persists, it's all up with you and you are landed with the loan you are floating, and a big loan it is, too. Finished, no more tchervonetzes, no more credit, no more anything! A second crash. Down comes the State Bank for the second time, the calvary of the Soviet gold rouble.

Then goodbye to the dream of stabilizing your paper on the London or Paris Exchange. The bankers in the west won't touch it any more than the Russian peasant would.

'What's to be done? You think you have found out; put the goods within the peasant's reach, all he can possibly want, at the exact moment when he receives in Soviet coinage payment for his harvest. And there will be shop counters all over the plains up to the very end of the black country, where the peasant, distrusting but at length convinced, will be able to spend your paper money as he is itching to do. Only here comes the vicious circle; to supply the shop counters you must have the goods, just remember that; and there are forty-eight million labourers! If you buy outside the country you will lower the value of the tchervonetz even before it has been lodged in the Bank.

'We shall work,' said Mr. Profiteer.

'With what will you work, except with imported machinery and raw material? Will the bourgeois in foreign countries condescend to trade with Beelzebub?'

'They want our corn, Zinovy.'

'Not sufficiently to make them forget their

loathing of Communism, especially now that they know that you, the state capitalists, are using it as an article of exportation. Hear them talk, Nathan: "We are quite willing," they say, "to resume business dealings with the Soviet. We have shown our good intentions, our peoples even accuse us of being too simple-minded. Well, the moment has come to give up all this propaganda. Will you absolutely entirely, and on your oaths, cease maintaining relations, open or in secret, with the enemies of our institutions?" That's what they say, my French comrade,' added Zinovy, turning to me.

'Yes,' said I, 'pretty much like that. It is certain that the Moroccan affair makes the French feel ill disposed towards the Soviets.'

'You will see that as good casuists they will answer you again with "the U.S.S.R. is not the International."'

'But that's perfectly true,' said Nathan.

'Yes, brother. Once the west used to listen to you, smiling. Now they are beginning to laugh in your face. The moment has come to take one side or the other. What are you going to do? Will you disown the French Communists? Will you renounce the International?'

At this moment—it was nearly eleven o'clock—the concert began. The opening bars of the Ride of the Valkyries echoed through the night from a column of iron and stone on Na Kryché which shone out like a torch, a dozen storeys above Moscow.

The other Jew was silent. He leant towards me to apologize for the simplicity of our meal. He would have liked, he said, to give me the rarer dishes, semolina pudding from Smolensk or the lappe medwede (bear's foot in sharp sauce). Then he turned to his co-religionist :

'What is the good of our getting angry, Zinovy? Look round you; they laugh when they see us angry. Russia has laughed at us for a thousand years ever since Vladimir<sup>1</sup> said to us at Kief: "You would give Heaven to others and you have not even a country on earth."'

The other completely lost his head. He stood up, bristling with anger, as furious as a mad bull. He took off his glasses and threw them on to the middle of the table where they fell into the congealed gravy.

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<sup>1</sup> St. Vladimir (c. 956-1015), Grand Duke of Russia and hero of many ballads and legends.—*Translator's Note.*

‘ If only you leaders had been strong enough, you three hundred Jews on the Central Committee, strong enough to make the Slavish cows work! But you can’t cast off your cloak of affliction except by trickery. “ For so many centuries they have persecuted you,” you say. Yes, all the more reason to call out, take the command, strike instead of weeping. Bah! It’s too late. You are laughed to scorn. Evil for those who are scorned in this country!’

He writhed in anger. His hair was like the tail of a black comet. He began to rave, quoting Ezekiel. People supping near did not dare to look up to gaze to their hearts’ content—it was better to ignore such behaviour; the Guépéou is down on anti-Semites. But a young man wearing an undecorated white forage cap over his ear, sat himself down in front of our table, his hands in his pockets. He seemed a young man of good family, speaking French without an accent: ‘ Comrade,’ said he to me, ‘ come back next year. The Na Kryché will then have eighty floors. And then more. You are on the Tower of Babel.’

## CHAPTER XVII

### *THE STATE RELIGION AND ITS SOLDIER-PRIESTS*

**C**AN the Bolshevik Revolution, then, be a Jewish revolution, a scourge of Israel? Only just that?

No. The Mencheviks in February, as well as the Bolsheviks in October, included Israelites in their ranks. As a matter of fact, my two contentious Jewish friends at the Na Kryché boasted of the fact. The height of the skyscraper inspired them with the madness of lofty ideals. It must be admitted, too, that if there was in their suggestions the boastfulness of a challenge, they did not in any way express the sentiments of the Jewish world. In the ghettos of old Paris as well as among the bankers of Lombard Street, in Warsaw as in New York, Israel indignantly refutes the charge of confusing Judaism with Bolshevism. Countless letters written in every language in the world have

carried the wails of the Hebrews to my very desk. Are these complaints well founded ?

Of course there are Red Jews. How could it be otherwise in these countries of pogroms ? Remember that until the days of 1917 the wandering race endured, as a burden of grief and infamy, the shame of being educated in the country of 'blind kings' and 'simple folk.'

There are, then, Red Jews and they are the chiefs ; Kamenev, Zinoviev and Trotsky. Yes, but the Revolution is a work of Russians, the true Russians. Not only through its moving spirit, Lenin-Oulianoff, a man of the lower ranks of the aristocracy (for though he was the son of a provincial mayor, he was at heart as true a Russian as Prince Tichitcherin and the peasant Kalinin). Not only, I say, through the presence of these men at the head of the Revolution is Bolshevism truly Russian, but also because of its religious character. Have I not shown how the men who sell chasubles and altar vases also sell red flags and the Soviet clarion calls ?

Communism is a religion. A faith which has had its martyrs and fanatics. Life to-day

goes on at full speed ; that is why in Moscow the Inquisition followed on the heels of the Catacombs. While in Russia I had the opportunity of seeing the ' righteous,' its implacable and absolutely disinterested followers. These men are a type of saints. They dream of a society formed like a monastery, they live in the faith and for the faith, they are poor and little known and they love suffering. They are Russians.

One of them was my companion one night in Moscow. We were wandering together along its endless streets, still as death, with the gleam from the lighted shops and their motionless police agents. I did not hide from him any of my feelings. Instead of getting angry he was sorry for me and tried to convert me.

I knew, in the war, a Breton priest very like this Marxist. While we strolled along the Tverskaïa or to the Marshals' Bridge and I listened to him talking of Communism, I felt a sort of alarm. I thought of Gamelin in *The Gods are Thirsty*,<sup>1</sup> so good-humouredly cruel. I have never felt so strongly as I did during those

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<sup>1</sup> Anatole France's satirical novel (1912).—*Translator's Note.*



nights the close resemblance between the Jacobin and the Bolshevik spirits. Robespierre's admirers must speak of him like the mystic companion of my evening walks. When we passed in front of Lenin's monument I thought involuntarily of the feast of the Supreme Being.

But in the political side of the religion of this Slav, so poor and eager, there was something fierce, a thirst for conquest, a relentless, pitiless cosmopolitanism. To him the writings of Karl Marx were Holy Scripture and the propaganda of Marxism a crusade. He spoke quite gently, but in his eyes I read his eagerness to spread Sovietism by fire and steel. His hatred of our Socialists was terrible, and only equalled by his contempt for the Communists of the west 'who can't "down" Capitalism.' You realized his religious feelings still more when, abandoning invective, he returned to doctrine. Then I understood that, for the Russian, Communism has a sense of community! He spoke of Trotsky as one would of a heretic. And he was right so far, from his own point of view and that of his followers, that in May, 1924, the Party Congress summoned Trotsky to 'acknowledge his faults.' He half obeyed them, attending a Congress where he was

expected to make a public confession like the famous scene in Verhaeren's *Cloisters*.<sup>1</sup>

A religion it is, indeed, with its international assemblies, its councils, its retrogressions and excommunications, symbols and relics. A Vatican in its patience, its sense of continuance. Those who fail to understand that know nothing whatever about the nature of Bolshevism. It is not without due thought that I have called Lenin 'Commander of the Faithful.' All orthodox Russia lives possessed of the idea that the Soviets are ruling in the name of the Anti-Christ. In the eyes of the lowest classes they are looked upon as trampling down of sacred things. But is not sacrilege itself a form of faith?

In that respect Bolshevism is truly Russian. But there is no doubt that there is something else besides, namely the part played by the Jew. The Jews have brought to it a spirit which is scientific. The great mistake which we make in France is to consider a man like Monsieur Zinoviev, for instance, as a politician. He is a philosopher; I dare not say a vivisectionist. To the mind of a man like him a nation is really only a herd of

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<sup>1</sup> Drama in four acts (1900).—*Translator's Note.*

guinea-pigs and Russia an experimenting table five million kilometres square. Was there in the whole world such a field where the heartless curiosity of the sociologists could practise? Not once have the patients cried out under the lancet. 'Nitchevo' has allowed everything, even the admission that so much suffering had been useless and that the deaths of many million innocent men and women would change nothing whatever in the human heart.

Many times since my return to France have I thought of all that. What would be the reactions of our own people under the rule of these Muscovites with their all-consuming faith and these Jews with their ungovernable intelligence? Before we answer we must remember that Bolshevik science and mysticism finally end in a sort of militarizing of the citizen, a life in the battlefield, now fierce, now gloomy.

Is it really conceivable that the land of freedom would endure the blind fury of these 'trainers' without keeping their bullets for their own officers? Remember that there is a communist discipline, the obligation to support those in command and silence all criticism. There is the Quick March, Form Fours, and the implicit obedience of a whole nation. I

shall never weary of repeating that the French worker does not know where the goal is to which it is intended to lead him. Trotsky says: '*In militarism every phase of social development finds its clearest, completest and most definite expression.*' That passage may be found throughout the letters in *Terrorism and Communism* (p. 228). and they are words which old Hindenburg himself would not have dared to write.

It is civil militarism, neither more nor less. Let us hear Trotsky once more :

'*More than forty thousand workmen, he admits, have passed before the Ural Council appointed to enforce the obligation to work. Where did they come from? The greater part from the Third Army. They were not sent home again but given a new field of activity. From the Army they were sent to the Council for the Enforcement of Labour, which posted them again in different classes and appointed them to deal with the factories.*'

That state of things in our country—never ! Those of our workers who call themselves Communists all believe that it means a new freedom. Go and tell them that Sovietism is an army with its badges of rank, general staff,

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pay, reveillé, medical inspection, and 'last posts.' At the first word of this undeniable truth you will find them all turned anti-militarists—just as the orators imbued with the spirit of the pure and holy Marxism, if they dared to preach in our country as they do at Moscow, would only find libertines and anti-clericals.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### *THE 'RIGHT' WAY TO SEE MOSCOW*

**A**MONG the directors on the Soviet Union there prevails a kind of cinematographic spirit. They encourage a system of brief glimpses, pictures in quick succession and big scenes. No power on earth is their equal in making a good show. They place motor cars at the service of their guests; whose tours, admirably planned, just skirt along the front of this social Los Angeles. As to the other side, they do their best to hide it from indiscreet looks.

Those who take advantage of these excursions are generally workers and school teachers from the west, most of them very decent people, but who have hardly been prepared by their every-day business for the position of scrutineers. They come along quite unsuspectingly. Concealments that have become almost classical instances of camouflage are the result of their

clear-sightedness! Off they go in classified lists, so to speak, to decide upon the condition of a vast country. A model factory, a model farm, model barracks, a model school. They make the round in the wake of the guide. A wave of the wand and the car goes hooting on again still farther, full up with dazzled tourists.

I remember, about 1920, having visited under exactly the same conditions a devastated region where I had fought. I was still a mere apprentice in reporting. A motor car, graced by the presence of a magistrate, bore me along among re-sown fields, where peasants were celebrating the kind acts of the Government all in strict time, like an opera chorus. And what can I say of the illustrations and reports brought out for me to admire in an office in which typing machines clicked like a hailstorm?

I remembered that incident a month or so ago in Moscow while the party guides were conducting through the city a delegation of Belgian Socialists, who were shown everything except what they ought to see. A visit which they never forget to recommend to pilgrims from old Europe is that to the model prison called, as I have said elsewhere, the 'Institute of Deprivation of Freedom.' I think that it

must be after this particular visit that the Soviets form a good idea of the resistance of western heads to intensive beating. In Communist papers many accounts may be read of these initiations into the so-called penitentiary system of the U.S.S.R. It would be worth getting up in the night to laugh at if it did not hide the most heartless methods of repression and the memory of a terrorism unprecedented in history. Good-natured worthies, with perfectly good intentions, describe the prison saloons, where the guilty smoke cigarettes and read the complete works of Dostoeffsky while waiting for leave to go out—from detention, leave which they will spend among their family before coming back to the gaol where masters of honesty instruct them in the art and the practice of becoming honest men. Charming fantasies!

Such stories have their effect on sensitive hearts. But they take care not to take the delegations from the west to the 'In Pace,' where the poor wretches who escaped the 1918 massacres have been groaning for so many months. They take care not to show men who, although Marxists, have not necessarily a black board instead of a heart, the appalling statistics



of the murdered: 28 bishops, 1219 priests, 6000 teachers, 9000 doctors, 54,000 officers, 260,000 soldiers, 70,000 policemen, 12,950 land owners, 355,250 intellectuals, 193,200 workmen 815,100 peasants. A decent fellow, a motor cyclist, states that Moscow enjoys 'a condition of life *at least normal (sic)*' without in the least suspecting that there is in that city a policy of 'settling down' of which we shall speak later. Others are told that millions of workers and peasants voted for a Communist majority. But have they ever seen—in the true meaning of the word 'seen'—an 'election'?

And the Kimmersky, the Paradise barracks! So many visitors from the most important to the humblest have been shown it that it seems 'engaged' including the cast, for this sole purpose; cloak room, theatre, modelling studio, club, library, flower-decked refreshment room. Unhappily there are some other barracks in Bolshevik territory like the very worst kind imaginable, where young peasants go through a thorough-going military training under the orders of N.C.O.'s whom Comrade Trotsky has not trained in good nature.

And the factory—that famous place where Soviet sweetmeats are made and where, by a

clever device, the workers on the first floor are passed on to the third while the visitors are inspecting the second.

Then there is a hospital installed in the house of some vanished capitalist. Workmen injured in their work are extremely well looked after there. It is no better than any French hospital, but in view of Soviet resources it is quite good. The mysterious part of it comes in when the guide informs the delegates that workers when in hospital do not lose a halfpenny of pay. What is this pay? Can the workmen, even when ill and in hospital, do without it? We shall consider this in the chapter, 'The Hammer.'

And so on, indefinitely. The Soviets attach great importance to the 'spoken advertisement,' and they know how to choose their publicity agents. Are they to be blamed for it? It would be much better to put to profit the lessons which they give us. We might invite delegations of Russian workers to visit Paris and delegations from the villages to go on tour in Touraine. But I do not think that the people's commissaries are particularly eager to encourage the experiment. Europe has not yet learnt how to arrange them on any system of reprisals.

## CHAPTER XIX

### *SIGHTS NOT SHOWN TO WESTERN COMRADES*

**T**HE stench of those five, ten, twenty cells still sticks in my nostrils. I did not spare myself in visiting them and it was always the same thing. The real misery of Sovietism is not in the street but in housing. Those acrid cigarettes in boxes of alien design, what a lot of them I have burnt as I sat on broken-sprunged sofas! In Moscow you smoke as much as you possibly can so as not to be conscious of the room. The samovar bubbles noiselessly. You try and fill yourself up with tea and tobacco. There are so many loose stones on the floor that they crunch like the paths of a Casino. And the books, pamphlets and impossible paintings. Sometimes there is a broken-down piano which seems to have got there when the barricades went into liquidation.

There are always people lying full length on the sofas, while others come and go. Silence is everywhere. In 1925 you distrust the walls as in the worst days of 1918. An obsession for the microphone keeps Russian mouths closed—so it will be for the lifetime of a whole generation.

Microphones ! What good are they ? People live in each other's houses among people who don't know each other, whom five years of living together have not made acquainted, who often grow to hate each other like the chained galley slaves of former days. By these methods the Soviet powers have solved the housing problem. It is called 'the policy of settling down'. It is a nameless promiscuity, a travesty of communal dwelling, in which comradeship is reduced to sharing in common human needs and misery.

Must I describe the horrible life to which a million Muscovites find themselves condemned ? It is easy to imagine it when you know the system. It consists of only leaving the citizens sixteen cubic 'archines' space (that is eleven<sup>1</sup> cubic metres for each person). Suppose you

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<sup>1</sup> Or slightly less than 400 cubic feet.

had a room, and the Allotment Committee has come to look at it. Any excess of your allowance of air, wall and ceiling has been allotted to other tenants. Now in Russia rooms were on the large scale ; to-day there are often two, three or four families for one kitchen, entrance hall, and so on. As a rule no one is willing to sweep them in spite of the wrath of the House Soviet. Lids of old boxes replace broken windows. Some of the more particular tenants have made doorways with smelly bags of pitch. Everyone lives immured in a sort of surly terror.

The Tenants' Soviet, of which there is one for each house, is generally presided over by a sort of informer. There is also the telephone which performs many services for the Guépéou. In short, it is a mixture of barrack, monastery and prison. This is just about all of the Communist ideal which has been accomplished and continues to exist in Russia. Such is the limit of the equality promised to the workers.

There are also the little privileges. The people who are granted such favours are not only the officials—and above all (the irony of it!) the Government officials—but poetry,

drama and painting often get, in some extraordinary fashion, an extra allowance of 'archines'—on condition that painters, poets and actors collaborate outspokenly on behalf of Soviet propaganda.

But what of the others, those who submit to the law? I met a Russian who had lived a long time in France and Italy. He was a highly-cultivated man, western in ideas and feeling, a most sensitive fellow and highly appreciative of kindness. He is now vegetating in the dreadful hole in which I came across him. He saw my grieved surprise.

'Inferno!' he said smiling. But his eyes had a far-away look and two large tears rolled down his cheeks.

No, these are not the sights shown to our excellent pilgrims, the Government's guests, who come all unsuspecting from their distant quarters with their field-glasses and Marxist handbooks. During my stay in Russia it so happened that there came a delegation of Red teachers. If they did not know on their arrival the luxury of motoring, they will not say so any longer. What panoramas they have seen—soldiers' quarters, model factories, agri-

cultural colleges! And how lavishly were they given free pamphlets! Those statistics, curving lines, illustrations—they are sure to publish them—we may be completely reassured on that point. It is a good excuse for sparing the reader these useless, lying figures.

As for you and me, let us distrust all but life itself. Let us go among mankind, wander through the city and reach the open country. But not in a motor-car.

Do the official guides of the 'Paradise' take their clients to the auction room? Do they show their visitors from the ends of Europe, with burning hatred of the 'bourgeois' in their hearts, the poor old men who come to these rooms to sell their pipes, coverlets, photograph albums, the last remnants of a happy life? Have you been told, you tourists, bloated with theories and slogans, that this commissary snuff-taker sells everything quite uncontrolled? The first comer brings what he wants to sell and goes off with his money. Were you told that the poor people who come and sit on those greasy benches, who wait patiently for whole months and keep an eye on their treasures to try and buy them back from

those who had robbed them—were you told that they are no more bourgeois than you yourselves are? No.

In this hall there are no tears or laughter. Nothing arouses excitement or amusement. Close-cropped heads are lined up like an indoor parade beneath the scanty light of three lamps. There are people furnishing their homes, street urchins trying to buy a scent bottle, a few collectors and a haughty-looking dealer in antiquities in the garb of the Guild of Ironworkers. Everybody wears the demagogue dress.

But is it possible under the Soviet rule to sell pictures which, even though they hang on the wall of a private house, are really State property? It is not actually possible; nothing is so contrary to the law, but, in certain cases—perhaps the whole secret of 'having a good time' lies in those words. At the end of a few days I understood the miracle by which restaurants where they charge one hundred and fifty francs for a dinner are crowded out with officials earning one thousand two hundred francs a month.

Another thing I wanted to do was to travel on the hard benches in those carriages which



are a legacy of Tsarist days and of which it was said before the Revolution that 'only Jews can go in them.' As in *Athalie*,<sup>1</sup> times have changed. The travellers to be seen on the seats of the Moscow-Leningrad wagon-lits, are less frequently descended from Mount Sinai than from Mount Ural. On the other hand, the good Slavs are now always to be found in the hard benches. I have travelled with them—what a journey it was! I do not know whether much has been written about the smell of the peasant when he is travelling, but it is a subject that deserves whole libraries.

These compartments are huge and entirely made up of shelves one on top of the other, shiny from generations of sleepers. Large though they are, these swaying vans are overcrowded, and enormous bundles, such as fugitives and emigrants always take with them, block up the gangways. Between the seats and the ceiling is a thick cloud of smoke in which children cry and men spit grains of sunflower seed.

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<sup>1</sup> Racine's great tragedy (1691), said to have been produced less elaborately than its predecessors.—*Translator's Note.*

Sometimes, far off in the haze, may be seen a face with sad, fixed eyes.

Two or three soldiers began to sing. They were not the fine moving songs of former days, but marches set to music in the style of cantatas. Sometimes they were like music-hall cat-calls. But everyone's expression remained unmoved. At the end of an hour an officer got up and sat opposite me quite in democratic style next to a peasant woman, whose face was like some old Madonna and who had a basket on her knees. The officer, a colonel, was displeased at something. In a shrill voice he commanded everyone to be silent, said what he wanted, and then added: 'Now you may talk.'

Alas, no one had any heart left. A gloomy torpor had seized upon everyone, as well as fear. Some pretended to read, others looked out of windows to hide their eyes. Only a peasant continued to smile between the tow-ropes of his beard and moustache. His slanting, half-opened eyes stared at the colonel's boots. And the old countryman, chewing his grains of sunflower seed, spat them out on the carriage floor.

Thus the time passed, in that heavy, universal silence, till we reached the little wooden

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station where the peasant got out and I followed him.

I find I have not stated the object of my journey. It was this: I had gone simply to see this peasant—and his brothers. A visit to the Sickle. Quick march!

## CHAPTER XX

### THE SICKLE

“ IN the village they know that it will not be the men in Moscow or their ideas or acts which will exist for all time, but just such things as these apple-trees blossoming every spring in their old gardens and that will go on blossoming, as long as the earth exists.”—N. Brian-Charinov: *The Tragedy of Moscow*.

**L**ENIN has said, ‘ A hard-working peasantry under the direction of the workers uplifts Socialism.’

In former days I found a certain beauty in these words. They had the fine sound of the 1848 Manifesto,<sup>1</sup> and they seemed to me to sum up a whole programme. But now, on my return from a journey through the countryside of Russia, they make me burst out laughing.

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<sup>1</sup> Promulgated November 4th, 1848, the New Constitution promised many reforms worthy of a democratic republic.—*Translator's Note*.

“The peasantry under the workers’ direction—” There is something misleading here. In the first place, the Russian workers do not direct anything. They obey, with some speechifying, the orders of a handful of intellectuals. But these chiefs themselves do not show up as very important personages in the eyes of the peasants. Their Council, the sacred keystone of the Soviets, floats painfully on the stream of country life. The peasant is the master and a master as formidable as he is silent, ever since he set up famine like a scarecrow at the city gates. ‘Comrade Harvest,’ as Bolshevik orators said in their best public-meeting manner, does not obey the Soviets.

As a matter of fact, it was through the behaviour of the country labourers that the October revolution made a half-turn and now threatens gradually to transform the U.S.S.R. into an agricultural republic. Therein lies the great problem and also the kind of economic obsession under which the whole country is tottering. While she exalts the Hammer Moscow is only thinking of the Sickle. There are one hundred and ten million peasants in the Union, one hundred and ten million land tillers scattered throughout it, obstinate,

cunning, intractable, who must be ceaselessly cajoled and in whose presence the Soviet gospel will ultimately have to be denied. 'The truth is,' writes the American Communist Eastman, 'that the Bolsheviks started out with the battle-cry: "Let us carry the struggle between the classes into the country," and that now it gives its official support to the well-to-do peasantry.'

What surrenders and flatteries! First of all, they have had to confer the Presidency of the U.S.S.R. on one of these same men, countryman Kalinin. This was by no means one of their worst actions. Father Kalinin is a good fellow, who thinks and forms his own conclusions, gifted with intelligence and a simple sort of eloquence. He overcame the famine by going about and urging the 'little brothers' to work and sow.

But since then the peasants have made other demands. Because of these vodka has had to be re-established, although going 'dry' was an article of faith in the Marxist religion. Every sort of promise has to be made them and nothing hidden from them. Because of the peasants, so it seems, Government cannot recognize the French debt. As for the Soviet bank notes,

they will not take them at the end of harvest time, unless they can cash them immediately. And the Dictatorship has to give way.

The 'absolute power,' surrounded though it is with battlements and sentinels, very humbly obeys these barefooted labourers who are already getting rich, while 'uplifting Socialism under the direction of the workers.'

In the village, which I had reached after a rough journey in a kind of stage wagon, it was the feast of St. Mary. The Bolsheviki shoot down the priests, but turn saints' days into national holidays, just as, while they proclaim the merits of Spartan black broth, they sell State sweetmeats flavoured with angelica. August 15th, Holy Mother of the Soviets! And in Red Russia all the religious feast days are state holidays. That is another matter of which they omit to inform the 'Comrades of the West,' all of them so well known to be swallowers up of the Church.

So, then, it was a holiday at G——. Everyone had got up at sunrise and washed in the drinking water fountain. Cakes had been made which gave out a smell of lamp oil with a mixture of contraband vodka.

Well, to continue. These peasants have, it is true, rounded beards and their hair basin-trimmed ; but they are still peasants, such as are to be found everywhere else, and there is nothing about their amusements to astonish the traveller. Some were playing the accordion. No instrument is so universally popular as an accordion, with its low notes like a hymn and its tea-garden tune. And everywhere an accordion calls for cakes and dancing. I saw peasants and village girls dance the pliasa, a sort of comic mazurka. This went on all day until twilight, that unreal Russian summer night, during which time girls sang in their deep-sounding voices stupid and very mild variations of popular airs :

“ A peasant to Moscow made his way,  
And in the train stood up all day.”

And the man playing the accordion imitated the laughs of the company. But one gets tired of everything ; the village ended by going to bed. In the clear moonlight the cottages were lined up like a gipsy camp. The wind bowed down the corn, sweeping over it far away to the endless horizon.

I am describing just what I saw. You could imagine it was the times of the Tsars. These millions of peasants live as in the days of Ivan



the Terrible, sleep on their iron stoves, eat their rye bread, light up the ikon, scorn yet fear the priest. 'It is only on the surface,' I shall be told; 'in reality everything is changed; the country has become Communist, a village Soviet.'

We must see what that means.

When the Revolution divided up the 'barine's' estates among the peasants, the 'Mir' the old agricultural system, disappeared. The 'Mir' consisted of a distribution of land according to the number of hearths in the village, in the proportion of four-fifths to the landlord and a fifth to the peasants. About every year a fresh distribution was made. The peasant was eager to get the land, but he felt no attachment for his allotment; it did not seem like his own country.

The day came for the great distribution of property; the barriers were removed. It was said in every hamlet, 'Form a Soviet, the earth is for all.' Throughout the whole of Russia there burst out laughter, a feeling of joy kept under for a thousand years. But scarcely were the ploughs cutting up the soil than the Moscow representative came and said, 'The land is for all, that means for the State.'

At once there was a strike such as the world had never seen, a strike of peasants, a folding of strong arms. The Red Guards came. Whole villages were massacred. But in vain. Russia is such a vast country. The peasants do not read the papers. They did not even know that their brothers were being killed; there was not even terror learnt by example. There was famine.

But almost everywhere men were found bolder and more self-confident, men who worked at the soil, sowed, gathered in corn and money. And what happened then? Whoever knows country life will understand. Having got rich, these men leased out their lands and labourers. From 1920 they were the forerunners of the N.E.P. When Lenin made the admission, 'We have made a mistake; let us go to the assistance of economy in our agriculture,' he was obviously thinking of the new landed proprietors, whose ploughmen were furrowing the State lands, just as the labour of the French villeins tilled the property of nobles and church on the eve of 1789.

'We have made a mistake,' said Moscow. In obedience to the laws of reason the Central Executive Committee granted to the peasants

what they had already taken without permission. The exploiting of the land was authorized *with a maximum of twenty workers for each district exploited*. All that to cries of 'Down with Capitalist France,' 'Down with the French peasant usurer.' Only, since in a revolutionary country demagoguery always has the last word, the new landowners, christened by the offensive name of 'Koulaks' (plutocrats) and looked upon as exploiters, lost the right of voting.

Town dwellers may be perplexed and intimidated by means of such laws. The artful countryman is not without resources. He is not to be a citizen? Very well. He allowed the People's Commissary to read out his ukase in the market place. He let months, whole years, pass by. During all this time his eldest son was growing up, becoming a 'pioneer' then a member of the 'Young Communists,' and next a member of the Government. Of these sons of 'Koulaks' there are three or four in each village forming the local Soviet. They are elected in due form by their fathers' hired labourers and send in reports to Moscow with a praiseworthy Soviet loyalty. All these reports are classified. Visitors from the west are called on to admire them. Monsieur Tchitcherin said

to me quite solemnly, 'Our peasantry takes an active part in politics.'

That indeed is quite true. They have summed up the situation and know how to maintain it. Their fathers, those village worthies and exploiters, do not vote. But their sons go as delegates to the Soviet meetings, and it is these two thousand horny hands which, with their threatening caresses, throttle the twenty-one sacred throats of the Præsidium.

Controlling politics through this son, the 'Koulak' keeps his hold on religion through his wife; the 'baba' is skilful in slipping her offering into the priest's brown hand. As for the farmer himself, deprived of the right of voting, outlawed from the proletariat, he keeps his roubles and borrowed goods. And laughing into his beard so like a Cythian faun's, he tolerates the 'government' of those very men who cry out to the world, 'We have abolished exploitation of man by man.'

## CHAPTER XXI

### *THE HAMMER*

**I**N the U.S.S.R. there are four hundred and fifty thousand Communists on the party register. There are fifteen million workers in Russia. Officials, employees, etc., number about two hundred and fifty thousand. Allowing for the absence of an intellectual, a peasant, a business man, or a soldier on the party register, there would be one active Communist for seventy-five Russian workers.<sup>1</sup> All this after eight years of Communism.

I am not fond of statistics, as the reader of this enquiry will grant me. But figures sometimes are terribly eloquent. That in a country where the proletarian is dictator there should be one militant for ten who merely work is a

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<sup>1</sup> Later statistics show, on the Soviets' own admission, that the disproportion is actually as great as one militant Communist to 103 workers.

statement against which the flood of explanations beats as uselessly as against a brick wall. From the Soviet point of view it is possible that one man enlisted is worth far more than the nine who refuse to do so. Regarding the activity and indifference among the working masses there is much theorizing of which Moscow propaganda makes very copious use. I would refer the reader who is interested in these questions to the organizations whose duty it is to inform him. Let us simply say that our Cartesian philosophy is not well suited for the sort of contests in which ingenuity sets it to combat reason. From our point of view the abstention of the Russian workers, in the face of a Government which proclaims the supremacy of the workers, is a death sentence.

As a matter of fact, the Russian proletarian is discontented, far more so than the worker of the west. Perhaps it is unfair on his part to be so. The Revolution has undoubtedly improved his condition. But he argues by comparisons, and causes for comparisons are not lacking, however careful the Soviet censorship may be on this point. The world now knows that My Lord the Worker earns between eighteen and twenty roubles a month in a

country in which the purchasing power of gold is seen to be diminishing more than ever before. The consequence is that My Lord the Worker grumbles. The Government which depends upon him hears him. This grumbling takes the form of Factory Soviets, speeches, threats to strike, strikes, reports. The Soviet papers record all this loyally. They express the Government's wish (which I believe to be quite sincere) to satisfy this discontent. So matters go on quite comfortably, but only till it comes to the strike.

For there are strikes. They are put down with a severity of which the capitalist powers will never learn. When it is known, for instance how Comrade Djerjinski, the People's Transport Commissary, suppressed in 1922 the railwaymen's agitation, one is rather surprised at the long-established hatred of our railwaymen extremists of Monsieur Briand. The textile workers, who at the present time seem on the fidget, will find they have to deal with the same Commissary, who in the words of Monsieur Herriot 'is not a mild-tempered man'. Reliable friends will keep me informed of the measures that Djerjinski will take; it will be rather amusing if I should be the

only man to tell the French workmen about them.

To all this the Communists never weary of putting forward an argument which they think unanswerable; 'It is quite true,' they say, 'that the Soviet Government stamps out mercilessly mutinies among the workers. But it is in the name of labour itself and not for the benefit of middle class capitalism that order is maintained and work made obligatory. By folding his arms a worker in the U.S.S.R. is a traitor to the proletariat.'

We shall come across the argument when we are discussing the army. It certainly might have been worth considering in a country living under communistic rule. But we have seen by the evidence of facts that nothing of the sort exists, that Russia, on the admission even of its own rulers, is going through a period of State capitalism. We must treat as it deserves a method of discussion consisting in putting forward, as the needs of the cause require, sometimes dreams, at others realities. To a perturbed Europe the Kremlin says, 'See, we shall open the banks again, we shall restore economic life, foreign trade, religion.' To cosmopolitan revolutionists the Government hurls its watch-



word from the same buildings. 'Class warfare, dictatorship of the proletariat!' I am a bird, just look at my wings! Never perhaps in the whole of history has there been seen such an example of duplicity.

And, curiously enough such a state of mind does not prevent the Bolshevik chiefs from being both honest and sincere. I saw that quite clearly in the discussions in which Monsieur Kamenev and I fought it out together. Many a time did I want to show him how the general application of the N.E.P. was driving the Russian Communist party into the Opposition. At each attempt this excellent organizer, this practical man, answered by putting to me questions of pure spiritualism. He even persisted in this course when, by the logical sequence of our arguments, I succeeded in showing him that the rule of Proletarian Dictatorship, as at present in force in Russia, establishes for the true proletariat a slavery far more oppressive than the life of the French working classes before the Corporations.<sup>1</sup> Without denying the facts, Lenin's

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<sup>1</sup> All corporations of persons in the same trade were declared illegal in 1791. This act was finally abolished in 1884.—*Translator's Note.*

successor drew from them the most disconcerting conclusions, at least for a man created for the freedom of the common people.

Nothing could be better if Monsieur Kamenev were actually expressing the feelings of the working masses. But that is not the case, or at any rate if it ever was, it is no longer so now. The connection between the 'great masses' and the Soviet power is broken. Therein lies the real, the great tragedy. Eighteen thousand bureaucrats form a real Order of Economic Religion, which supports its own sole authority and alone maintains the dictatorship of the proletariat—without the proletarians. The fine side of it is the loyalty of the former Revolutionaries of February and October to a Government which is now a mere name, a shadow, a cloud of steam. These 'good fellows,' whose strong arms stirred up the riots, make a heroic pretence, despite their misery and disillusionment, of thinking that the Revolution is only asleep. They know that it is really dead and that a great ideal has passed away. But they bear no ill will. Such have been the men of the people for all time 'good to tax and good for the fighting line.' In every country in the world it is to their hearts that faith has fled.

I have seen workers in fairly great numbers. Their dignity, their general bearing have made the deepest impression upon me. The name of the Government and its scutcheon must have meant something. But if I took the trouble to question them at all persistently, all but a very few were full of their grievances, wherein could be recognized, word for word, the workers' troubles in every country and at all times—poor pay, abuses of authority, injustice, the foreman's harshness.

So far I had only been dealing with workers exclusively in the towns. It is, I am told, quite a different matter in the suburban factories in which peasants are working who are no less anti-revolutionists than the coachmen and flower sellers. Never mind. Within these men's hearts one feeling is uppermost—a dumb, constant revolt against social injustice. That sentiment is to be found in Moscow as strongly as in any French suburb. And when one comes to think, it is easy to explain. But the crowds of suburban Paris must not be told that it does not exist among the men of Moscow.

## CHAPTER XXII

### *A BOLSHEVIK SUNDAY*

THE scene was the countryside near a town, with tea-gardens, a hedge, and the tunes of an accordion. The road passed through a wood to reach the river banks. It is Pokrowski-Strechnevo, the Moscow riverside and Sunday bathing place. It was a sight not to be missed—such a chance of seeing how the populace enjoys itself.

The banks of the Moskva are at this corner laid out like a vast landing stage; flooring, parapets and steps down to the river. There was a cabaret on the terrace raised up a little like a platform which gave a general view. What was there to see? A public bath, but not the least like our own.

The authorities have reserved for bathers a bend in the river divided into three compartments like the sticks of a fan. The middle one is for mixed bathing where both sexes bathe

together on condition that they wear costumes. This compartment is not greatly patronized. In the two other pools, the men (on the right) and the women (on the left) bathe together in their thousands, completely naked. At the central point was a police sergeant in a skiff, whom from time to time the bathers ducked in the water just in fun.

I do not think any sight could be imagined more depressing and less alluring than this mass of nude forms in broad daylight. Every conceivable ugliness, every unkindness on the part of Nature took its revenge in display.

When the Soviets, at the beginning of their rule (under some inconceivable excuse for classic beauty for all alike) defined the limits of these exposures of naked flesh, anti-modesty societies were formed in Russia. These societies naturally decided that to reserve the privilege of exposing the body solely for the bathing parties at Pokrowski was too narrow a limitation of the law. So they decided to bathe in that condition in the heart of Moscow. They—and especially the women—kept their word. Throughout the summer men and women, devoid alike of prejudices and bathing costumes, might be seen plunging into the Moskva from

the most frequented bridges. As a matter of fact, pretty women were seldom seen there ; it was the others that took their revenge.

But all this was not enough for the extremist supporters of the *in naturalibus*. They started walking about in couples as nude as Greek statues and thinking themselves just as well formed. They went in this state and sat in omnibuses and restaurants. They wore Grecian bands tied crosswise with such inscriptions as 'Down with modesty,' or 'Modesty is a middle-class prejudice.' These eccentrics of course claimed Karl Marx, who has a broad back, as their authority. But in the end the Soviets got annoyed. Somewhat roughly they requested these so-called Communists not to offer to the community their good points. Henceforth to be nude was only allowed in the bath.

As I have said, it was a cheerless sight. Poor Sunday ! And it soon became far more depressing through the weather which clouded over. Beneath a sky swollen with rain the crowd hastened towards the gardens. Bathers hurriedly dressed ; families, spectators, everyone took refuge round the tables. And then the rain began.

It was then that I saw perhaps the best instance of the utter death of gaiety in Russia. You can imagine what this crowd, scurrying all in its Sunday best, would have been like up the river in our own country—the laughter, songs, practical jokes—in a word, this mass of high-spirited people, defying heaven and its downpours, treating this accident to their merry-making as a mere joke, and knowing how to keep a stout heart in spite of unkind fate. A chapter out of Paul de Kock.

In these Russian tea-gardens the crowds just drank and smoked in silence. Not a voice tried to break this heavy, gloomy atmosphere. No one even looked up at the sky from which the rain was pouring. The men sat stolidly in front of their glasses, cigarettes in the corners of their mouths, and their eyes fixed on the ground. A few parties talked politics in weary tones, like men once again discussing the topic of the day merely to kill time. All these men were workmen belonging to the labouring classes. Some had doubtless shouldered rifles in October to defend the Revolution. They had fought for the new era. What remained of so many dreams and promises? Not even those Sunday tunes, the

workers' humble, healthy, enjoyment—nothing but a silent awakening after the Great Dream.

Have they any faith left, these men whom the Soviet work system (comprising seventeen categories) has placed in the lowest? They have a confused idea that this sort of thing must always be, that always there will be the masses sacrificed, obscure workers, crowds told again the eternal lies for generation after generation.

It was still raining. Evening was coming on. In spite of the storm one had to think of getting back to the Moscow streets. In little groups the workers got up. Trams and steamboats filled up with a sad-looking cargo. I took one of the last carriages. We passed through dreary districts. Poor looking rooms were lighting up. We saw in a school a Soviet of motionless people. On rushed our tram sending out great splashings of greenish water and the gleams of powerful headlights, which yet seemed so meaningless, and in which the well-lit cars on their way to the Hermitage passed by.

Men were selling papers. I bought one; it contained an article on the sad state of the French proletarians. And I thought what an impression a Russian workers' Sunday would



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make on those very men for whom the 'Izvestia' feels so mistaken a pity. Perhaps our workers have not yet got all the prosperity and resources which one would wish them to have. But is there a single one who would desire, if given a hearing, to attain to a 'happiness' in which the proletariat has even forgotten the time when it laughed?

## CHAPTER XXIII

### *A SOVIET MEETING*

ONE evening, towards six o'clock, a friend of mine in Moscow came into my room and said, 'Would you like to come and listen to a Soviet?'

'That's quite a good offer.'

'It's the Soviet of Picture Painters, and Cabdrivers.'

I thought I must have misunderstood, and as I pricked up my ears my friend handed me the 'Pravda'. There it was, well and clearly stated—Raphael and Automedon formed one and the same syndicate. Should I get to understand this? After a month's experience of Sovietism the mind grows used to every kind of paradox. You wouldn't be surprised to see surgeons tight-rope walking and priests opening beauty parlours. The miraculous seems to you quite the normal thing. That the Muscovites should have intermingled in Soviet fashion

the whip and the palette is quite in the order of the day, if such a word as 'order' may be used. Come along then to the Soviet of Painters and Cabdrivers.

We drove through the whole city. The meeting announced for seven o'clock was to take place in a sort of suburban chalet which formerly stood in a park intended for popular recreation. It is near the famous 'Mont-des-Moineaux,' in a district called Khamovni-Tcheskaïa. A tram sets you down just opposite the garden enclosures and in you go. The fine paths are well kept. On each seat was a couple, the man in blouse and high boots, rather thoughtful, the woman chatting and flirting.

It was quite a large park. Along path after path we reached the meeting place. Nobody there, although it was just seven o'clock. But punctuality was never a Slav virtue. So we waited, strolling up and down.

Towards half-past seven we saw coming towards us two by two some cabdrivers, with their rounded beards, and overcoats down to their heels. Then came some townspeople rather mean and shabby looking, as well they

might be after seven years starvation. In all there were about forty people.

It was now eight o'clock ; night was coming on. The company decided to go into the Soviet chalet. It was but a 'thin house'; the hall could have held two thousand people. Where in heaven's name were the Moscow cabmen ?

Time passed by. Girls with cigarettes were selling every man the wherewithal to keep him patient. Towards a quarter past eight three panting cabdrivers came up and, seeing that they had come too soon, began to scratch their heads. Then off they went again without a word. Everywhere else the silence was unbroken. It looked as though there was no common interest or any special sympathy between modern painting and driving with a slack rein.

The arrival of another person soon banished this unhappy thought. This individual carried a bag swollen into a lump and had a crabbed look on his face. He came hurriedly in, made his way to the end of the hall and clambered on to the platform. Arrived there, he took off his cap and leather coat and beckoned, which sign everybody obeyed and came forward.

When the noise had quieted down, this man

sat down, took a key from his pocket, opened his bag, and taking out a pile of papers began to examine them. It was now nearly a quarter to nine. He read on slowly as if he were sitting quietly at home, smoking, on the platform, and we watched him reading, smoking, in the hall.

‘Patience,’ murmured my guide.

‘Patience!’—I had enough and to spare. I had a distinct feeling that something was going to happen. As a matter of fact, after a quarter of an hour and three cigarettes, the man did put his papers back into his attaché case and condescended to notice that he was not alone. He stood up. It cannot be said that we sat silent, but our silence, already two hours old, suddenly assumed a significance and a purpose. We were all attention. Then the man on the platform made a speech :

‘Comrades,’ said he, ‘you know that Comrade Ivan Vladimirovitch is dead. The Soviet Government has given him a funeral worthy of him and the proletariat. Our business to-night is to elect his successor.’

At this point the orator made a fairly long pause and began to walk up and down. Suddenly stopping in front of the ruddy-faced

cabman and the pallid-looking daubers he assumed a fierce expression. He went on :

‘ Comrades, the Party has appointed as successor to Ivan Vladimirovitch Comrade Iouly Arozeff. Comrade Arozeff is a tried Communist who possesses the entire confidence of the Party. Comrades, if there are any among you opposed to the election of Arozeff, let them hold up their hands.’

As he said this word, the representative of the Executive put his own hands in his trouser pockets and cast over the audience a look somewhat similar to that of a colonel asking the recruits if the soup is to their liking.

You can guess the result. The silence of the painters and cabmen assumed a sort of community of approval. Not an eyelash moved. Nothing, no noise or movement disturbed the matchless loyalty of the Soviet. I admit that from this moment the election of Iouly Arozeff seemed assured. What admirable foresight !

‘ Well then, Comrades,’ said the orator, in a gentler tone, ‘ no one stands up to oppose the election of Iouly Arozeff, the Party Candidate. Good, very good. Now let those who are in favour of his election be good enough to hold up their hands.’

Then indeed we saw a fine movement executed with quite a soldierly smartness. Arozeff was unanimously elected. All the proletariat's representatives are elected unanimously.

When I came out from that meeting not particularly convinced as to the superiority of Soviet institutions over our old democracy, I thought things out. What could one say of a Government which, after seven years' experience, still works by these methods? What had happened under my own eyes at Khamovni-Tcheskaïa was going on throughout Russia, from one end to the other, from Archangel to Tiflis, from Kiev to Irkutsk. Proletarians have good cause to ask themselves if dictatorship and obedience are not the same things. They have been told that they were going to 'stamp out the Middle Class,' and all they see are hosts of profiteers rise up and prosper. They accept this state of things with that patience which is at the bottom of Russian character. But they would probably like to have their say about it. Impossible. Voting by show of hands is no vote at all; every striker knows that. I have been a working man, I have been on strike, and I know what I am talking about.

Is not the fact that the Bolshevik government (having completely cancelled its 1917 programme) does not even now consult the people either on the doctrines barred by limitations or on the present state of affairs—is not this fact, I say, its death warrant? Monsieur Herriot has said so. ‘The ideal in such a Government is to suppress all parties, to found public life on a theory, to remove every sensible individual from political life, to crush the spirit of criticism, the only active element in human progress.’ From the interest which painters without commissions and coachmen at five francs a course can display in such serious matters, we may say that they share Monsieur Herriot’s opinion. I shall be told that they said nothing about that the other evening in Moscow. But they did not think the less. All Russia is thinking, but she says not a word. Has she been given any choice in the matter?



## CHAPTER XXIV

### ARMS AND THE MEN

'In militarism every phase of social development finds its clearest, most complete and definite expression.'—  
Léon Trotsky: *Terrorism and Communism*, Conclusion,  
p. 228.

THE 'Humanité' is sold in Moscow for fifty kopeks, i.e., for five francs a copy. That is not a 'popular' price. I was surprised, but my astonishment did not last long. It ceased on the day on which I noticed an article devoted to a discussion of Military Discipline and Supremacy. The Soviet Government, which maintains an army and ruins itself to do so, has no intention that that army should be corrupted by anti-militarist propaganda. It takes its measures accordingly; fifty kopeks is a week's pay. By this arrangement—even if some of the Red soldiers read French—the Party can be quite easy; the soldiers will never

know what advice Moscow is giving to the combatants in Morocco.

Nowhere are two sets of men so remarkably like each other as the Tsar's soldiers and Soviet soldiers, who wear on parade the old Imperial trousers. They are fine-looking men, with simple expressions, great cigarette smokers and great grumblers. They are recruited by casting lots and nearly all come from the country. I saw them parading on the foreground of the Kremlin. They were marching up and down and saluting, just like soldiers in any part of the world, with just a touch of that gentleness characteristic of their race. Nothing showed that they were soldiers conscious of the proletariat. They were just a body of men recruited by the usual methods, enrolled under the old ideas and being taught that their effectiveness will mainly depend on their discipline.

As for steadiness under fire and the outward signs of respect, the Red Guard is well worthy of the Emperor Alexander's Guard. On the day on which I went to call on Monsieur Tchitcherin I waited for a moment in a little room furnished with gilt carvings—and a sentinel. I have never seen a functionary so dreadfully

like a block of stone. In 1925 only a system of kindness could have got such a result from its army; everywhere else there would be a universal outcry against barbarity, and the governments, obliged to make concessions to the anti-militarists, would have to check the zeal of their captains and lieutenants. The U.S.S.R. has none of these difficulties to deal with, provided that Russian Communists only stir up the soldiers in foreign countries to disobey orders.

The trials of the Soviets with regard to their army are of quite a different kind and of a more dignified nature.

In a word, Moscow has not got an army at all—she has only soldiers. Recruits have almost completely failed and the supply of officers is even more deficient. We were shown with a simple pride generals of twenty-three in command of army corps. When approached and looked at, these proletarian generals were seen to be the exact equivalents of the sergeants. They do not know anything more than the sergeants, ridiculous though this may seem. The Commissaries are mistaken as to the causes of our scepticism.

‘How old France has grown since Arcole,’<sup>1</sup> they say. ‘Have you quite forgotten your own beardless generals?’

Thereupon we have to answer that what puzzles us is not the youth of the officers, but the way in which they are commissioned. The generals of the French Revolution, in the fresh glow of youth, had all been chosen in the field by the shouts of their own soldiers. Though beardless, they had within them the experience of the long wars of which they had been born, and in the words of one of the greatest among them they had ‘to teach the whole world the war of disciplined enthusiasm against war of uninspired tactics.’

Such enthusiasm is not attained in a moment. The great chiefs of the Red Army, whom I could get near, have neither education nor influence. Some have seen civil warfare and have shown themselves brave fellows. But none or scarcely any of them are capable of taking a wide view of the details of their profession. Former generals of the Tsar have

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<sup>1</sup> The scene of the complete victory of Napoleon (with Masséna and Augereau as corps commanders) over the Austrians in 1790.—*Translator's Note.*

taught them tactics, strategy, the control of large bodies, the employment (in theory) of massed troops, and the intercommunication of the distinctive arms. But such instruction, lavished upon intelligences that are quick to learn rather than well grounded, has not been able to raise up subalterns to the rank of commanders. It is a mistake of the demagogue.

Suppose that the pupils of the School of Mines or Polytechnic were replaced from day to day by clever boys from the primary schools. Instead of training skilled engineers you would merely turn out mechanics and foremen. The Red Army are all equals in the sense that among them nothing rises above the level of the company ; it is a huge symmetrical mass with parts put together anyhow. It is assuredly enough for the part of a Pretorian Guard, which circumstances appoint it to perform. But whether it can further Moscow's imperialistic ambitions is a more doubtful question. It is quite probable that it would not put up a very strong resistance at the first attack by an army led by real generals.

So we are far indeed from those pictures of the future wherein poets show us Soviet hordes

in Mongolian helmets, sweeping like a thundercloud over our old country. If the west is to perish it will not be in this fashion. It will not have been nearly enough merely to paint the 'steam roller' in its reddest colours to make its advance unconquerable.

The masters of Russia are well aware of this weakness and these mistakes. I shall show how, not having given up Potemkin's<sup>1</sup> all-destroying ambition, they would ask for nothing better than to possess a Suvarov. But in this army without strength or loyalty they find the reward of policy and deceit. You cannot with impunity invoke pacifism and at the same time brandish a sword as if it were an emblem of justice. It is not enough to call what was once the Don Grenadier Regiment the 'Kimmerski Workers' Regiment' to inspire recruits with an enthusiasm for the Revolution.

And then, in the army as everywhere else, the utter failure of that great Communist equality ideal turns simple minds against the Government. The Red guardsman, who serves

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<sup>1</sup> Grigory Aleksandrovich Potemkin (1739-'91), a statesman all powerful through his influence over the Empress Catherine II.—*Translator's Note.*

his three years and gets six roubles a month, looks askance and with astonishment at Comrade Lieutenant spending ten roubles a day and sending ladies bouquets. He would more willingly accept the distance which separated him from the 'barine' of former days. There is nothing worse than an equality that is at the mercy of an inferior's reasoning powers.

Attempts are made to counteract this state of affairs by the strictness of discipline. The Proletarian Military Code is quite the equal of Prussian Army Orders in strictness and brevity. Moreover Comrade Soldier, detained till late in barracks and, so to speak, kept apart from his civilian comrades, merely looks upon his time of service (just as soldiers of all nations do) as a long series of troubles, fatigues and favouritism. Bad feeling intensifies. It even penetrates to the officers. I will merely quote one example, and I have chosen one that is quite official. About the middle of September a contingent of young officers passed out from the Military School. The People's Commissary, Frounzy, who is the Soviet Minister of War, made on this occasion a speech to the newly promoted. And as an appropriate greeting for their entrance

into an army career he harangued them in the following words :

*' Young officers never dishonour the Red Army.'*

This superb opening phrase and the speech that followed it may be found in the 'Pravda' of the 11th August. Confidence continues to reign.



## CHAPTER XXV

### *THE NEWSPAPER STALL*

**I**NQUISITIVE people often ask a traveller in Moscow: 'What about the papers?'

The answer is that there are a great number of them. The answer also is that there are no papers at all. Or that there is only one paper. It all depends on the point of view, and all these three answers are worth considering.

If the importance of the Press is reckoned by number and actual weight, Soviet journalism might be said to be one of the most important in the world. Moscow spreads over the whole country a vast net of printed matter. Editors must require versts and versts of paper, since they always write at great length, and have no scruples in repeating the same things inexhaustibly, mercilessly. So there are many papers and many pages in every one of them.

But if the duty of the Press is conceived to be the informing of public opinion impartially, the

presenting of problems to which circumstances demand the attention of the citizens—if journalism, in short, is held to be nothing without freedom of opinion, it may be said that these daily tons of blackened paper do not result in making up a single copy of a paper worthy of such a name.

Lastly, one may imagine a journalism absolutely under government control—printing presses used solely to spread the views of the strongest party.

The Communist spirit adapts itself very well to such a state of affairs, on condition, of course, that it is the sole beneficiary from them. Agitators and officials whom Moscow supports in the west take no pains to conceal their feelings as to the freedom of the Press. These sentiments are perfectly orthodox. In Russia the Soviets do not allow opposition in a paper any more than they tolerate contradiction in a conversation. So as to be always in the right, they rely upon the simplest, but also the surest, method; they suppress all who oppose or contradict them. However, since the proletariat wants to read and to know about things, it is given some papers. But these sheets with their various names are in reality only one sole

organ whose function it is to express the Government's views on every subject.

It cannot even be said that the censorship merely controls the Soviet Press. The Press is in the hands of the 'Politburo', just as the corpse is in the hands of the layer-out. Not a line which is not in accordance with the official truth, not a comma which the government microscope has not scrutinized. As a matter of fact it is not often that this scrupulous tyranny has to assert itself. For the professional editors are, as may be imagined, carefully selected. As a rule their articles, as well as their news, only serve for captions of the 'leading articles' which the chiefs and doctrinaires publish. It will be seen how closely this revolutionary press resembles our own papers in 1793 and 1848, and indeed of the Commune.<sup>1</sup> In France popular movements are always carried out under the impact of ideas. A revolt multiplies the number of papers and platforms. The views of Latin races are most clearly expressed by free discussion.

The Bolshevik spirit is quite the reverse.

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<sup>1</sup> Proclaimed March, 1871, when the German troops marched out of Paris.—*Translator's Note.*

This uniform, sermonizing Press, with its figures and statistics, is an exact reflection of the mind of those cold-blooded revolutionaries who have never understood that the beauty of Revolution can only consist of uniting liberty and equality. Most of the articles are written to instruct; they are very long, and often extremely irritating, with an obsession for financial problems.

But the newspaper columns—chiefly in the 'Pravda'—are also occasionally transformed into forensic duels, somewhat like the clubs to which orators in the time of the Convention resorted, to try the effect of their speeches, or make up their quarrels. This form of dispute between statesmen is a purely Soviet conception. There was a famous example in Russia which has left in the country the memory of a regular fight with daggers drawn. It took place in December, 1923, at the time of Trotsky's trial.

These furious quarrels are rare. As a rule the great Sovietists are satisfied with getting into the Press 'letters' running to six or eight columns, in which they lay stress on Marxism in its relation to Bolshevism, that is to say, to Leninism. The subject is not without interest

for the general public ; but it would be a gross exaggeration to consider these tedious commentaries as attractive journalism. The dailies, however, are full of them.

One of the most obstinate of the prophets of the Soviet Pathmos is the Doctrinaire Boukharin, of whom Lenin wrote in his will, that he has 'a head stuffed with books and knows nothing of the Marxist argument.'

Here is a list of the principal papers in the U.S.S.R. First the *Izvestia* (the News), the Government journal, whose editor-in-chief is Comrade Voline. It is the official organ of the Præsidium. The *Pravda* (the Truth) was formerly Lenin's paper. Then comes the *Ekonomitchskaïa Gizn* (Economic Life), edited by that notorious assassin Djerjinsky. In the same class are the *Finanzovaïa Gazetta*, the organ of the Finance Minister, and a journal of commerce and industry called the *Torgovo Promyslenaïa Gazetta*. Next come the popular papers : *Rabotchaïa Gazetta*, a paper for the working classes costing three halfpence, and the best got up of all ; *Rabotchaïa Moskwa* (the Moscow Worker) ; *Troud* (Work), the Syndicates' paper ; *Bednota* (Poverty), the paper of

the better educated peasants and poor people ; *Krasnaïa Svezda* (Red Star), a military paper, and lastly *Goudock* (the Whistle), a paper for railwaymen with a large low-class circulation.

The principal weeklies are : *Agnek* (Little Fire), an educational magazine of the same class as our *Lectures pour Tous* ; *Bonzatiou*, a comic paper not unlike the old *Assiette au Beurre* ; *Smektratch* (Laughter), and *Krokodil*, both comic papers ; *Krasnisport*, a sporting paper ; *Krasnikino* (Red Cinema), *Novy Zritel*, a theatrical weekly ; and lastly the *Journal Delia Genchtchine*, the paper for fashions and Paris taste in Russia.

All these papers, from the truculent *Pravda* to the satirical *Krokodil*, from the high-class *Ekonomitchskaïa Gizn* to the frivolous *Lady's Journal*, are products of the strictest spirit of discipline. Their writers may have their fling at anything and everything, except at the Government. On that subject their duty is—silence without a murmur. The high spirited relieve themselves by exhausting their energy on the infamous west. And they do it pretty thoroughly. France and England especially are shown up with the greatest regularity. That consoles the grumblers for their vain

search in their papers for a caricature of the Dictators or that lashing with the whip of satire which always 'gingers up' a Government. Moscow has not even got the equivalent of the Roman *Becco Giallo*. For formidable though his appearance may be, Monsieur Mussolini has more sense of humour than Monsieur Zinoviev.

To be quite truthful, I must admit that the desired effect is attained. The citizens of the U.S.S.R., who for the last years have had no other papers or orators than reporters from the Kremlin, have ended by surrendering every right to their own opinion. In fact, the people's commissaries rule without check or opposition. And if I were asked, 'Will this state of affairs last?' my answer is unhesitatingly, 'It will. There is no reason whatever for it to end. Moscow's policy will doubtless evolve a sort of agricultural federalism or a United States on the western plan with a capitalist system. The rulers themselves will pass on. But the Soviets will keep their hold on the country, which by that time will have become middle class again, and — who knows? — perhaps even Liberal!'

After Lenin, after Trotskyism, after the

Dictatorship of the Troïka ('Three abreast'), other men and other formulas will have their turn. But it will still be the same old 'Soviet policy.' A perusal of Russian newspapers shows that clearly enough, as well as the half admissions of the Troïka. As a matter of fact, what is this Troïka? What is its history? We will now proceed to consider it.



## CHAPTER XXVI

### *TROTSKY, TROTSKYISM, AND THE TROIKA*

ONE of the things which most impresses a traveller coming to Moscow is the boom in portrait selling. Everybody must be perfectly aware of what the great men look like. Set all round the busts of 'Iliitch'<sup>1</sup> (naturally the most important) they fill up the counters of bookshops and paper stalls. Russian Bolshevism is verily the nursling of papers and bookstalls! So reproductions of Kamenev, Tchitcherin, Zinoviev, Stalin, Kalinin, Boukharin, Rykov, Djerjinsky, Krylenko, Lounatcharsky and others are set out for sale in their thousands.

Now when he looks at these displays a traveller from the west, who knew little of the eternal convulsions of the U.S.S.R., must feel some surprise not to see among them the harsh,

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<sup>1</sup> Lenin's patronymic.

secretive countenance of the most famous Sovietist in the world since Lenin's death.

There is not one portrait of Trotsky—*not a single one!* The man who in 1919 saved Red Russia when it was attacked by Denikin, Koltchak, Petlioura's Ukrainians, from the Poles marching on Minsk, from the Germans under von Bermond, from the Lithuanians, Latvians, Esthonians, and the Allies at Murmansk—the author of the 1905 Revolution, the escaped prisoner from Siberia, the 'cudgel' of Lenin, the mainstay of the 'permanent revolution'—in a word, Trotsky, may be said to be effaced from Moscow life.

When I set out for Russia I did not imagine that Trotsky's opponents would have dared to have humiliated him to this extent. As a matter of fact for several weeks I could not get my request for an interview forwarded to him. The polite votaries of the 'Troïka' displayed that same deliberate lack of energy, that careful confusion, that well-timed forgetfulness with which throughout history Russian bureaucracy has been known to oppose a reporter's importunate curiosity. Finally, on the day before my departure the office sent me in one parcel my passport and an invitation to meet Monsieur

Trotsky—for the following week. It was as clear as daylight.

So I set out on my return journey without meeting the most famous of the Communist chiefs, the man whom Lenin in his will described as 'the most eminent character, heart and soul devoted to the Revolution.' I had a feeling of having been deceived. But I think that I had at least one consolation to moderate my regrets. That was that Trotsky (even supposing that he had been informed of my efforts) would probably not have said a word to me about the famous 'anti-Bonapartist' crisis from which he emerged defeated. He would have kept silence in the name of discipline. There would only have been just the slightest expression of his willingness to obey.

Perhaps no man in history has shown such self-denial, such energy in sacrificing himself for the safety of a cause. Certainly before he allowed himself to be shelved he defended his policy with an intense bitterness, leaving nothing to chance, striving with all his force. But when, by dint of a trick, the Troïka conspirators had forced upon him the alternatives of downfall or of raising the standard of revolution, he elected to quit office. Thus did

Robespierre on the day following the Session of Thermidor,<sup>1</sup> although a sign from him could still have stirred up all the discontented elements. Trotsky the organizer, the unopposed Chief of the Red Army, was actually master of the situation. This is so true that, on the day after his resignation (January 15th, 1925), such officers as were devoted to the fallen Commissary, that is to say the backbone of the army, were hastily sent on leave.

Those who had been determined to bring about Trotsky's downfall (in Russia they are called, with just a suspicion of mockery, the Troïka) are Kamenev, Zinoviev, and Stalin. They are all three brave men and two of them count as among the finest intellects of the U.S.S.R. Did they jibe at the popularity of Lenin's collaborator? Were they really sincere when they denounced Trotsky as a man of boundless ambitions, a sort of Commissary in military boots, in short a Bonaparte quite capable of crushing the Revolution? It is difficult to express an opinion. At the beginning, at any rate, they must have been prompted

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<sup>1</sup> The eleventh month (mid-July to mid-August) in the French Republican Calendar.—*Translator's Note.*

by sentiments quite above reproach. The thirst for power did not appear till later, at the same time, indeed, as the extraordinary violence of their methods and the gross unfairness of their attacks.

At that time Zinoviev was directing the trend of opinion in Petersburg, while Stalin was attacking in the 'Pravda,' and Kamenev, always prudent and careful, was keeping silent and also keeping an eye on the enemy.

Now what was the deep reasoning which persuaded the Troika to overthrow Trotsky's supremacy? It is now beginning to be known. As a matter of fact the 'Bonaparte danger' never seemed to them very serious. It is even possible that it was invented in the needs of the cause. What impressed them in quite a different way was the struggle in which Trotsky was engaged against the Soviet bureaucracy, that sort of religious order which made Communist officials Knights-Templar of the Kremlin, obedient to its sole and exclusive discipline and entirely free from popular control.

Trotsky's opinions were shared by many others. Throughout Europe the real chiefs of the Revolution, warriors tried and true, shared

his anxieties as to the party's future. His defeat was their own. No sooner was Trotsky overthrown than the new chiefs, henceforth sole masters of the Politburo, hastened to exclude the whole gang of the uncannily intelligent opponents of a so-called Leninism founded on deliberate disobedience to Lenin's last wishes.

Let the reader recall the confusion of the politicians of the Extreme Left in our own country at this time. Middle-class opinion attributed this utter failure of the most antiquated Socialist tactics to the skill of the French Government; the proletariat did not understand it at all. Much the same view was held in Germany, in Italy—everywhere. In a few weeks the party leaders saw themselves replaced by officials. Eloquence and genius were hurled into the Opposition. Old insurrectionists suddenly appeared on the scene as 'Reformists,' and by using the wildest jargon—'Wandering from the path of justice,' 'Confusionism,' etc.—they aroused the suspicions of the man in the street towards those members in whose view extreme measures did not sum up the beginning and end of every revolutionary action.

Trotsky's fall brought with it the immediate

banishment of these men. Moscow turned them into rebels. Whenever Trotsky should return to political life, a new revolutionary front would be formed in the west. Middle-class opinion ought to be instructed on this point; they think they see in Trotsky, if not an ally, at any rate a politician alive to the obligations which resumption of business relations between Europe and the U.S.S.R. entails. Moreover Trotsky, merely by his presence at the head of the New Russia, would put an end to the 'communism of war.' Will he ever return?

Yes. It will doubtless be by the path of reconciliation. The battle which the comrades of the Politburo waged against him was only the climax of a crisis of responsibility. Now that the turning point of the Revolution is passed, now that the October Terrorists are willing still to take a romantic view of their past experience, the two parties will be able to work together. For men's raging passions pass on and lose their force like other storms. Trotsky's self-denial will have prepared the way for his return, and his return will regroup the real forces of the Revolution in the west, the intellectual forces. The fight will have been for

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nothing ; they will all find themselves once again at the cross roads of oft-tried experiments, those roads to which life always leads back anyone so rash as to follow the paths that lead to Utopia, if he lives long enough to retrace his steps.



## CHAPTER XXVII

### *THE PROBLEM OF TRADING WITH THE SOVIETS*

A FRENCH writer was recently in Moscow. A pleasant surprise was in store for him ; in the bookshop windows he found translations of all his works, beautifully illustrated, the fly-leaves (he was glad to see such scrupulous honesty) showing the number of the edition in recognizable figures. He thus ascertained that eighteen thousand copies of his book had been read in Soviet Russia.

As this was quite unexpected, his satisfaction was all the greater. As a matter of fact neither his publisher nor himself had been advised. Doubtless the translators' enthusiasm had made them forget that trifling formality called right of translation. Besides, what did it matter ? The ' copyrights,' to use a technical term, had been secured at a convenient time. All was quite in order, and as diplomatic and business

relations between Paris and Moscow were now renewed, the next stage was a settling of accounts. It was like the proverbial silver, fallen from heaven!

So the French writer imagined, and he rubbed his hands. Very soon he was rubbing his eyes. That was when, hat in hand, he went and asked his creditor to send him a cheque. His creditor was the Soviet Government, since in the present state of affairs in Russia the only trading is State trading.

Well, the Government laughed in his face. The Government asserted that certain French editors had published, without permission, translations of Tolstoy and Dostoieffsky, and that consequently, as a measure of reprisals, the U.S.S.R. editor considered himself justified in publishing the whole of French literature, past, present, and future, without paying a single halfpenny to the writers concerned.

This is not a mere story. The French novelist on whom this little trick was played is myself, with all due modesty. And my account of it is not for self-advertisement. Only I think that this incident throws a certain light on the question of Franco-Soviet business relations from which each side will benefit.

Am I going to assert that we must refrain from trading with Russia? No. I shall at once be accused of playing Germany's game, since that country is said to be selling enormous quantities of goods to the Soviet Government. But everything points to the German importers insisting upon guarantees. Follow their example. Get your money first. Such is my advice to my compatriots after my own experience.

In the Government offices of Moscow I was given a great mass of tracts, statistics, accounts, tables of comparison. I shall neither publish them nor comment upon them. Not, indeed, because such a proceeding would prove devoid of interest, but because these documents are already lavishly distributed in Paris to all persons concerned. The work is very well done under Monsieur Krassin's control. For Krassin, unless I am mistaken, is at the same time Soviet Ambassador in Paris and the People's Commissary for Foreign Trade. I do not deny that the U.S.S.R. system of commerce, by centralizing everything in the hands of the Government, makes important business transactions easier to carry out. Moscow boasts of this achievement. In a propaganda pros-

pectus, which the Komintern will soon be distributing, an anonymous writer declares that the only means of regulating to a rouble or a pood<sup>1</sup> the balance between imports and exports is to be found in entrusting to the Government the sole and exclusive rights of buying and selling. The whole Soviet press takes its tune from the State hymn-book. Articles bristling with figures lay stress on the advantages of monopoly and 'absolute control.' Abolishing by this system 'the disadvantages caused by excessive and non-competitive prices, due to the greed of private traders,' the U.S.S.R. claims that it gets the best prices for its flax, cereals, and raw material, and that it buys at the lowest cost prices our tools, materials and fancy goods.

All this is extremely satisfactory on a 'heads I win, tails you lose' system. But in every business transaction there is a seller and a buyer. Does Moscow expect to persuade the other side to sacrifice all their advantages on the altar of Soviet 'Trusts'? No. Moscow is suspicious; it has ceased to believe in the miraculous.

So true is this that Russian state-absolutism

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<sup>1</sup> 36 lb.

is beginning to mix much water with its red, so to speak. The fact is that the Government's very existence depends on the importation of goods and credit. The rouble will only be stabilized in proportion as farmers trust the State which buys up its harvests, and it is well known in Moscow that only the possibility of immediately exchanging his paper money for goods will reassure the peasant. The position is clear enough. The Soviets want state capitalists. That is the only reason why they have lowered their tone, though all the time and on every occasion they proclaim that, once the capital of the funds is re-established and the main industries are re-constituted, this being 'the essential base of Socialism,' the fight between themselves and the bourgeois will be resumed in all its intensity.

Is it all fancy phrases, platform spoutings, demagogy? We cannot say for certain. But we can remember that on many occasions the Bolsheviki have asserted that 'agreements made with the capitalist states, that is to say, illegally made, are only to be honoured so far as they promote the interests of the proletariat.' We know what remains for us to do. A country warned is twice as strong.

Whatever the facts, this question of economic and business relations is too complicated and too important to be discussed here. It would require of itself a long series of articles. My own view is that the attitude of the U.S.S.R. towards the question of the debts suggests that we should be careful.

Shall we find in New Russia the trade openings promised to our business men, which have inclined public opinion to favour the recognition of the Soviets? The future will answer. My duty is to say that, in my modest opinion, the benefits from the business side will not compensate for the persistence of the propaganda, for Soviets and Communism seem (as it were by chance) to be united and inseparable when it is a question of making a bargain.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII

### *MASKS AND FACES*

**E**XAMINE carefully the Soviet coins and you will see that they are of two kinds. The first, struck towards 1922, have as an emblem a worker at his work, raising a heavy hammer over the anvil, a symbol unmistakable, pacific and comforting. The other coins, the new ones, which are being minted to-day, display the earth as a globe with the sickle and hammer outlined in front of it. This is equally easy to understand, but may be rather more alarming. Perhaps we shall soon have a third allegory, when Moscow throws off the scaly mask of the International to announce to the whole world the new visions of Russian Imperialism. Then whoever designs the Soviet coins will merely have to cross the sickle and the hammer on top of the globe, in order to recreate the cross-crowned globe of the Tsars.

People will understand his meaning. Some people have already done so.

The policy secretly planned by the rulers of the former Russian Empire is undoubtedly the most ambitious of our time and also the most hypocritical. It is true that Imperialism is never openly admitted; it always finds excellent excuses to make to the world at large.

The pretexts of the U.S.S.R. are quite original. The idea is to create a strange form of Internationalism to stir up, uphold and exploit Nationalism wherever it can injure other nations. On the other hand, the Government of Moscow, though declining to put into practice Communist doctrines among its own people, uses Communism as a means for penetration, an instrument for corruption, a sort of social dope. Again we find in this policy that duplicity, that profound cunning which, in all its relations with foreign countries, is the characteristic of Soviet rule. Just as the Soviet Government never lets an opportunity pass of solemnly denying the propaganda of the Third International (as, for instance, in the Morocco business), so, by way of a quite legitimate compensation, the Communist Party declares with the greatest indignation that it is not



a political arm in the service of Russian nationalism.

Let us consider the value of these denials and all this indignation when confronted by the facts.

Ever since the Soviet Government abandoned the idea of bolshevizing Europe, no one need be surprised at Moscow's devoting all her activities to the Asiatic problem. For the moment, and so as to have their hands free, they are satisfied with 'just a nucleus' in the west, and for that purpose docile but compromising local Communists are not so extensively relied upon as secret agents, well supplied with roubles.

Moreover, it is not merely for amusement that difficulties with France and England are invented and that, to ring the changes, the outcry is raised in the Communist papers throughout Europe against 'Murderous Imperialism.' All evidence points to these designs being connected with a plan of general action. Protests are made, too, on behalf of the anti-Roumanian countries in tones nobly humanitarian, but which scarcely serve to conceal Soviet designs in Bessarabia. There are also the attempts to

stir up the old discontent in Poland. But all this is only scheming with an eye to the distant future, an investment for which payment will be long in coming. Moscow's immediate field of action is the East and the Far East.

A milestone roughly indicating the progress of Soviet Imperialism has been set up by the capture of Chita in Transbaikal and the formation of a 'Far East Republic,' with Mongolia on one side, encircling Manchuria and extending almost to the boundaries of Korea. The day on which the Republic of Chita was incorporated in the U.S.S.R. the Internationalists of Moscow had no further need to conceal the fact that they were restoring, for the benefit of the 'Russian people,' the policy of the Tsar, that very policy which provoked the Russo-Japanese war. At the same time, ever faithful to their 'nucleus' idea, the Soviets sent their agents to China. There they preached a patriotic type of Communism, a kind of 'Down with the foreigners!' which massacres all foreigners to the cries of the International.

Mongolia is already separated from China; perhaps to-morrow it will become a member of the Soviet Union, and on that day the old Russian policy will have re-discovered the road

to Mukden. It will then be possible again to threaten Japan and to surround and dominate China, into which country it has already penetrated on the west, armed to the teeth, along the dusty roads of Chinese Turkestan.

So much to the Far East. In Western Asia we find the same policy, the same determined, secret working. Persia and Afghanistan have been bolshevized as far as possible ; especially Afghanistan (the road to the Punjab) by which the policy of Moscow might prove a grave menace to the British Empire. There, too, the Soviets are winning successes which they pretend they are not exploiting.

As is well known, they have displayed more actual brutality in Georgia. That was because the need of winning the prizes there was more urgent. Zinoviev, who has at least the merit of not mincing his words, showed himself a firebrand in speech-making, like a man untroubled by the suspicions of 'capitalist nations.' His frankness may be commended ; he is perhaps the only man in that part of the world capable of admitting the necessities of Soviet policy. And, as is only right, he gives their ambitions a Communist absolutism. He will say, and go on saying, that a conquest (even a

conquest of territory !) by the workers is an act of civilization, while the expansion of the bourgeois races can only be an act of exploitation and immorality.

These modest admissions are, however, the only ones to be got out of the Bolsheviks. They deny everything. I can see, even now, the look on Tchitcherin's face simply at the word 'Imperialism.' Blasphemy ! Would anyone dare to claim in the presence of this man, an Internationalist heart and soul, that the Red Army and the Soviets' heavy military expenditure are perhaps unjustified by the sole requirements of defence ? If Tchitcherin allowed anyone to maintain in his presence these sacriligious assertions, it would simply be in order to refute them in the name of the well-known unselfishness of the proletarian state. He would say that the expansion of the U.S.S.R. is really to be highly desired, solely so as to extend the benefits of the doctrine. It would be quite useless to tell him that the Soviets' eastern policy is in every respect exactly the same as that of Catherine the Great and her minister Potemkin ; that even in the eighteenth century Moscow was endeavouring to stir up trouble in Persia and to exasperate the ever-

lasting quarrels of this 'Asiatic Poland'; that even then Potemkin was endeavouring to foster discontent in China by the dispatch of young Slavs to Peking, and that the establishing of the caravan route from Kiakhta in Mongolia foreshadowed the creation of Chita.

To all this the Soviet diplomatist would reply by the magic word 'International.' This, I think, is the detestable feature of Soviet Imperialism. Whether legitimate or otherwise, a nation's ambition may at least have the excuse of loyalty. But it deserves utter contempt when it is concealed under the mask of altruism, or, worse still, in the garb of a sacred duty.

As a matter of fact, in the whole world there are no more determined Nationalists than these politicians, whose ambassadors proclaim their pacifism far and wide—just as the Soviets, who came into being in 1917 when the army collapsed, are to-day the most militarist nation in the world, and just as Moscow, while raising a loan by a national lottery, strives to discredit by her scorn, alarmist language and provocative articles in the press, the borrowing of French capital.

Russia, in spite of all revolutionary baptisms,

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still remains Russia. She has not given up any of her old dreams. In 1923 Herriot was denouncing the re-establishment of the Tsarist policy in the Far East. It is equally true to say that the Soviets do not shut their eyes to the dream of possessing Constantinople. The Russians will always see that gleaming buckler, which Rurik, the barbarian chief, hung thousands of years ago at the entry of the Bosphorus. It would be so simple just to change the Crescent into a Sickle.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### *SOVIET PUBLICITY WORK*

**T**HE 'Musketeers,' as in France they are called in jest, and who are the chief men in Soviet Russia, profess to be Internationalists, whenever they talk to proletarians from foreign countries. But they control Russian affairs like patriots.

In the same way, those who have re-established capital in their own country, endeavour to pass for Communist intriguers outside it. Countless examples of this duplicity could be given.

It has its comic side as well ; for instance, the Soviets' claim to represent the resumption of agricultural labour as a Communist victory. As a matter of fact, they have only been able to get the peasants to work again by re-establishing private holdings, farming and the exploitation of agricultural labour ; in other words, the excellent harvests and the good condition of the

fields are due to the Soviets' own surrender to the 'koulaks,' the bourgeois of the countryside. It is a complete victory for capitalism. After having abandoned the cry of 'No landowner,' Moscow has the impudence to exult, *outside her own country*, at the triumph of the rural proletariat. Is this not utterly ridiculous?

Other farces are not quite so amusing, particularly the citizens-of-the-world air assumed by these politicians so eager for conquests, these unscrupulous land-grabbers. The truth is—and it cannot be said too often—Communism as well as Internationalism are only articles for foreign consumption. Soviet ambition uses them no less skilfully than persistently. They are really excellent methods. But they are by no means the only ones.

A fact which is not sufficiently appreciated in our country is that the Bolsheviks, in their eagerness for expansion, do not hesitate to employ the most contradictory methods. For the true inspiration of these hard and fast rules is opportunism. Everything is grist for their propagandist mill, both the intensive use of a stupid enthusiast and the slow winning over of an adversary possibly open to conversion. In order to weaken a capitalist nation they will



stick at nothing, as witness their disastrous interference in our country and in our neighbours' in the Moroccan affair. They care little for the dangers to which they expose their agents; these are mere details when Government policy and important interests are at stake.

For principle goes for very little when Soviet interest is at stake. A quite recent example must have impressed even the most simple-minded. It occurred when our Internationalists so-called by Moscow, raised in their artless way the cry of 'The Riff for the Riffians.' Everybody laughed at them.

Elsewhere, especially in China, the Soviets go one better; they excite hatred of foreigners among the Yellows. And we see the very guests of the Kremlin teach in Peking the habit of pogroms, for which, however, their own ancestors had no occasion to congratulate themselves.

In Turkey, where Kemal is said not to be trifling with the Red Flag, bribery will be the means employed, bakseesh will be given more lavishly.

In Italy and Roumania there are other systems; these countries provide the 'down-

trodden,' indispensable for a propaganda of sympathy among the Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian peoples. As for Germany, a country in which humour is barred, the system there is that of a policy of reprisals which sometimes is interrupted for exchanges on a large scale of people who have got into trouble.

It will be seen that resources vary here and there according to possibilities. Monsieur Tchitcherin does not conduct his business on hard and fast rules. He gives his customers the goods which they require without haggling.

Throughout every form of Soviet propaganda may be discerned the intention of exploiting, in the main, two things—discontent and sympathy. Note with what regularity the Moscow gunmen appeal to the humanity of intellectuals to crush the 'White Terror.' Far be it from me to mock at a noble sentiment. But consider the extent to which the dread of the White Terror diminishes with increasing distance. As a matter of fact, the violent acts of revolutionaries only infuriate the Communists and are only made an excuse for petitions covered with signatures when they occur at the frontiers of new Russia.

As to the exploiting of discontent, it is the

very basis of Moscow's propaganda. We know, alas, the extent to which France is overrun by thousands of obscure speakers, giving bad advice, sowing the seeds of unrest, hawkers of poison. Any traveller knows that our country is a perfect Paradise compared with Russia. Not one of our workers would consent for a moment to change places with a Russian labourer. If this statement is not to be believed, it is quite easy to try the experiment ; let the Soviets send us fifty workers with their families to work for six months among us. I maintain that not one of them would return to Russia *of his own free will*. I don't even suggest trying the opposite experiment. Is that a challenge ? Yes, but one which certainly will never be accepted.

All this will not prevent the Soviet schemers from wantonly spreading hatred and despair in our dockyards. The small fry they will advise to ' protest against the new tram charges,' at the very time when, in Moscow, the charge for public travelling is one franc twenty centimes a stage. If need be, their cry will be all for liberty, and if a telegram happens to have been delayed they will declare that the administration exists to deliver all correspondence ' without

any regard to their contents.' But the Soviet Post Office, by opening and destroying letters, ventures to ride roughshod over the universal postage convention.

Another instance, even more detestable and in a way terrifying. It is well known that the agents of the U.S.S.R. spare no pains to corrupt the army. On September 9th their organ in France published a supplement entitled 'Brotherly Love.' I can assert as a fact that in Moscow if a traveller possessed by an anti-militarist spirit were to make such a speech as this to the Russian soldiers, he would be forthwith arrested, taken to the Guépéou and shot.

What is true in barracks is equally a fact in the factory. It is as easy as it is wicked to urge strikers to direct action. But the Moscow fanatics take good care not to tell our workers how Comrade Djerjinsky sets about putting down strikes. Again, they take a perfect delight in raising at our street corners the question of pay, but they invariably forget to inform the workers that the snack which they take with their families at the coffee bar when they come out of the cinema would cost them in Russia a week's wages.

Hundreds of examples could be given. But

what use would they be if those which I have quoted are not sufficient to convict the missionaries of Muscovite faith of utter hypocrisy? It is indeed a fact that on every point, according to circumstances, they renounce the so-called strict truth of doctrine. They surrender it without a blush. What in an excess of modesty they still refuse to call their foreign policy is only a continuous disavowal of what they are saying and doing in Russia. Internationalism, Marxism, anti-militarism, class hatreds—these sentiments only find scope beyond the Soviet frontiers. No country is so harsh towards the proletarians and soldiers; no statesmen yearn for the goods of other nations more ardently.

I am not afraid of being contradicted on a single one of these statements. It is possible, however, that some may feel so astounded as to suspect them. Now the Government of my country has the means, as it is their duty to do, of checking a traveller's remarks when this traveller tries to influence public opinion. If I have misled such opinion, I am willing to be discredited. But if what I say is true, others are telling lies. And such lies are too serious to be allowed to pass unrefuted. Each man has his duty to perform.

## CHAPTER XXX

### *EFIMOFF'S STICK*

IN the judgment of history, it is not their failure to succeed which condemns the Bolsheviks ; it is the price which this failure has cost mankind. There may be greatness and even something noble in the cruelty of politicians. Oliver Cromwell hanged the Thames sailors, but he realized the cost of blood. The Red dictators have never given it a thought. Their scorn for such contingencies is almost like a Book of Revelation. They have practised massacres as if it were an exact science. Now that they are ceasing to shoot, they are starving and killing, with the precision of the scientist in his laboratory, hundreds of people who have committed the crime of being born middle class. In their eyes human life counts for nothing. Let the people perish rather than the doctrine ! Lenin has openly proclaimed it. 'What matter if nine-tenths of the people

perish, provided that the survivors are converted to the Communist faith.'

From a revolutionary point of view this ghastly programme may find supporters. Men who have thought to change the face of the world have always had hearts of ice. Posterity may curse them, but at least it examines the reasons for their actions. But what is to be said of these revolutionaries, the most brutal in the world, who with their hands reeking with blood ask the world to accept a revolution that has failed ?

And they admit their utter failure. I have shown, as other travellers have done, how they have had to give up everything that served for an excuse for the hecatombs. What they have realized through Socialism far exceeds the programme of those whom they murdered in their thousands for the 'crime of counter-revolution.' A year of shootings, famine, suppression of all liberty, in order to realize a State capitalism, and, as a final stage, the absolute rule of the enriched peasantry ! Such is the balance sheet. Well, no man has the right to make such a mistake as that.

Nor was I alone in reporting their failure. Far from it. Apart from the 'inquirers' in their

motor cars, the Soviet guests, every traveller from the west, even the most sympathetic, is reaching the same conclusions. Monsieur de Monzie wrote, 'What is Bolshevism in its actual status? It is a system of nationalized degeneracy.'<sup>1</sup> In Edward Herriot's *New Russia* I read: 'The Russian Government seems established, but the original programme seems to have gone to pieces. Unless quite unforeseen developments occur, Bolshevism will have to undergo another transformation; this is the most probable supposition.' The American Communist, Eastman, says: 'They (Kamenev, Zinoviev and Stalin) have inaugurated such a system of dealing with the peasant question that if it were carried out to its logical conclusion, it would be a renunciation of Marxism itself.'<sup>2</sup> And M. Jules Moch, in a report extremely favourable to the Soviet Government, concludes with these words: 'They are raising a building of heterogenous materials; private capital rubs shoulders with a powerful State capitalism, monopolies, trusts, syndicates and peasant

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<sup>1</sup> "From the Kremlin to the Luxembourg," by Anatole de Monzie, p. 141.

<sup>2</sup> "After the Death of Lenin," by Max Eastman, p. 292.



policies. Some Socialist principles (actually very few) still exist in this variegated mixture.<sup>1</sup>

We all quite agree. And now I will relate a little story.

Monsieur Trotsky was speaking at Kiev. After his speech anyone might ask a question. An astonishing thing happened—there was actually one man, only one, who did so, a workman called Efimoff. This worker came on to the platform with a stick in his hand :

‘ Comrades,’ said he, ‘ you all see this stick. It will explain the history of the Russian Revolution. Before the Revolution the country was governed by aristocrats, whom the handle of this stick represents. This ferrule here is the convicts. The middle of the stick is the workers and peasants.’

He stopped speaking and turned the stick upside down : ‘ Comrades, the Revolution took place. The aristos are at the bottom, the convicts are at the top, while you have not changed places.’

The worker Efimoff of Kiev was arrested the following week.

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<sup>1</sup>“ Soviet Russia,” by J. Moch.

CHAPTER XXXI  
A LETTER FROM  
TCHITCHERIN

I AM publishing the following document without any comment. It is official and professes to be responsible for the facts set out therein. I ask the reader to judge for himself. Here is the letter :

MOSCOW, *August 10, 1925.*

SIR,

I send you herewith the declarations of Monsieur G. Tchitcherin. With compliments,

Yours faithfully,

(Signed) MINLOS.

' You have come to us at a particularly favourable time for recognizing the vast force of economic and political construction inherent in our rule. " Comrade Harvest," to use Lenin's expression, is in a fairly good humour this year and our financial situation

reaps the benefit. It employs this benefit to establish itself more firmly. Look around you, dear Monsieur Béraud; an intensive life is springing up in every direction wherever the eye of man may look. "No economic progress without individualism," say the Hoovers and the Fords. What a pack of nonsense! Look around you. What you see is known as the interest of every grade of society, the good of all alike. Each for all and all for one.

' The question of the Tsarist debts is the most important in our relations with France. I am convinced that we could come to an agreement with France on all the details and the handling of this question. But we must not lose sight of the fundamental point; our Government cannot assume new obligations, unless there is a possibility of its being able to develop, quickly and extensively, the country's productive powers to an extent which allows it to meet these obligations.

' In other words, we cannot come to an agreement on the Tsarist debts except on the condition of an agreement being concluded at the same time (either with one or several

groups of bankers) for the opening of credits in our favour. It is also as well to tell you, with regard to this question, that we are obliged to pay special attention to public opinion, to the large masses of men and women peasants in our own country. During the last few years our peasantry has played an increasingly active part in politics. It follows attentively questions of international policy, and throughout the country you would not find a single peasant who does not declare in the most positive terms that our Treasury ought not to pay a single halfpenny for debts incurred under the Tsarist rule. Our peasants would not permit any settlement to be agreed upon except in return for a financial loan to be effected at the same time and on satisfactory terms.

‘ The Press in your country often adopts a very unfriendly attitude towards our Government regarding the part which it played in controlling the Communist Party (forming one of the sections of the Communist International). To hold our Government responsible for the Communist International and for its various national sections, and to call it to account for all their acts, is one of

the favourite devices of our opponents who thereby exercise a pressure on the minds of their fellow citizens and stir them up against us. Such a manœuvre ought to be considered as bad faith. There have often been cases of political parties, religious groups, economic and other organizations attaining to power under one form or another and forming Governments. Their activities when in power, their efforts and their propaganda remained completely independent of the activities of the governments formed by their support. Macdonald's Government was not responsible for the activities of the Second International in the different countries.

' During your stay in Moscow you have the opportunity of convincing yourself, by looking carefully at all that goes on around you, that all our efforts are concentrated on internal organization and, above all, on the task of re-establishing our finances, an effort which presupposes the desire to develop regular economic relations with all countries—that is to say, the desire, generally speaking, of maintaining the peace of the world. Our international policy bears a character entirely pacific, is inspired both by the general

principles derived from the union of workers and peasants, the backbone of the Government, as well as by the demands and needs of our economic regeneration. Our Government cannot, then, think of interfering with matters that concern distant countries, because such interference would seriously compromise the realization of our principal tasks, notably the work of social reform and, its counterpart, the development of our peaceful relations abroad.

‘If you examine carefully our actual position, you will see to what extent and how profoundly the new system has transformed the great masses and how different the latter are from what they were under the former Government. For instance, they follow carefully our international policy and we can only maintain this policy successfully if it coincides with the opinions of these vast masses. At the numerous crowded meetings in which the members of our Government come into contact with them, we can always learn their views from their representatives’ speeches and the many written questions submitted to us. Local Soviets are so closely in contact with the masses that through their frequent

resolutions they always give us an exact picture of public aspirations. Our diplomacy consists in giving shape and life to the wishes of the workers and peasants in our country.'

I reproduce this letter. History will decide.

## CHAPTER XXXII;

### *MOSCOW, THE PINK-HUED*

**B**EFORE leaving the Soviet country I went for the last time up the skyscraper at the Tverskaïa Gate. It was nearly seven o'clock in the evening, the hour when smoke clouds dim the twilight. I was all alone. It was very windy. Low down in the sky, above the holy city, clouds were speeding on, and each dome showed, on its gilded side, the colour of the sky reflected. A loud echo rose up towards the Belvedere, dominated by the sound of bells, musical and majestic as an organ.

Then I saw all Moscow in its true colours—the colour symbolic of 1925. Moscow is pink. The Soviets had tried of late to smear it over with a scarlet brush. The whole of the Tverskaïa, the lightning conductors on the steeples were tinged with this pink glow. Three years ago it must all have looked like the stones



of a river bed after a stream of blood has swept over them. But red, to use a painter's expression, is a colour which mixes well and does not last long. Sun, rain and winds soon dim its proud hues. Moscow is pink, a cruel yet comforting symbol. So strong is life!

A waiter brought me vodka, pink-looking too. Evening died away. It seemed to me that, whatever men may do, Russia goes slowly along her road to happy freedom, beyond the tyranny of tsars and doctrinaires. Yes, slowly on—nothing hurries in this country of set pace. The Russian soul is eternal. The Kremlin and the Vatican are the only two places in the world where time does not count. What are eight years of Bolshevism in the country of proverbial darkness, in which in prehistoric times fogs wrapped round the chanting galleys? Eight years of talk, three million dead, only a blood spot fallen echoing in the night.

I have found it again, the soul of Russia—it is like Russia itself, savage, sorrowful, superstitious, wondering. Under the ashes of Marxism, glowing after the fire, all that was there yesterday and the day before may be found again, just like the mosaics with their gilded backgrounds of Ivan the Terrible, the drawings

of Michael Strogoff,<sup>1</sup> the cannon of the Great Army, that swarthy scarecrow Rasputin, the immaculate robe of the Patriarch Photius and the Empress Catherine's twelve ruffians.

This pink hue, this red gathering its strength, is everywhere. It is quite an obsession. On this very evening a little later when it was quite dark I saw, as on every other evening, the flag of the Kremlin, which is lit up from underneath, as with footlights of a theatre, with an unsteady light. Thus the emblem of revolution throbs all alone, stagily, above the city in the dark heavens. It reminds one of Louie Fuller's scarf floating over a slumbering Moscow. Well, on that evening, that night of farewells, I noticed that the Soviet standard, the flag on the Kremlin, had faded like all the rest. It, too, was pink, of a rich-looking, but faded pink.

And then I thought of a story which all Russia tells in a whisper. Here it is.

Once upon a time there were two Russians who wanted to play at being cocks, so as to imitate the French. They crowed 'Cock-a-doodle-do' ceaselessly, slept on a perch

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<sup>1</sup> Chief character in a romance and drama, by Jules Verne (1880).—*Translator's Note.*

and pecked about for their food. One day one of them said to the other, 'I think that down yonder, at the end of the west, the French cocks, who are old revolutionary cocks, eat their food without pecking for it, just like men do.' 'Really,' said the other, 'let us try it.' They did so and managed very well. Some time afterwards one of the cocks said to the other, 'I have been told that the French cocks do not get on a perch to sleep. They lie down in beds.' 'Well,' said the other, 'we must try that too.' They found this way of sleeping excellent. So the two Russians, though playing at cocks, began to live just like everybody else. But they still went on crowing.

The spirit of the people always finds a parable true to life. It is perfectly true that the Bolshevism of 1925 is still cackling out the old tunes of 1917. The N.E.P., waxing fat and wealthy, borrows the language of Communism, just as the agitators during the Directoire called each other 'Citizen'; and Mme. Tallien's friends, appearing nude at the Tuileries, announced that their charms were state property. History teaches us the real meaning of this shamelessness

and talk. The struggle between the classes has already become a war in fine clothes.

I have related what I saw. A future not far distant will say if I have used my eyes aright. Western nations will decide whether Russian Communism is anything else but a means of propaganda and decay. Other travellers will check or invalidate the account of an impartial European who, travelling alone and looking about him unrecognized, saw in the 'revolutionary capital of the world' only the restrictions of a government ceaselessly condemned by Socialist congresses and which, as far as the classes of society are concerned, is far more backward than many a constitutional monarchy.

They will know, too, if I was right in warning travellers from my own country against an idealism which, at vast expense, the Soviets are preaching far and wide and which they try to put down in countries administered by themselves. The future will show whether, in the view of Moscow, anti-militarism is like the 'rights of small nations,' not an article for exportation. Finally the future will decide if, in return for delusive promises and pretended

trade facilities, the nations ought to maintain in their capitals homes for revolutionaries protected by the old lie of diplomatic immunity. A loyal attempt has been made; I approve of the men who have made it. The time is coming to take the final decision.

I shall leave Moscow to-morrow. Who knows—perhaps from a distance I shall see a darker tint spread over the delicate pink of its fronts and pavilions. But if I do, I shall be very much surprised. For neither time, alas! nor the countries he has seen restore to the pilgrim, once deceived, his lost illusions. It is true that I shall sometimes remember that flame-coloured platform from which Lenin addressed the poor wretches in Petersburg in October. But I shall think of the Soviet proclamation and its worthless chief, Florinski, who let his father be shot and, despite his mean forehead, makes one hundred and forty million people laugh. The platform has been preserved, but the protocol invented.

Florinski is 'pink'; he is powdered pink all over. On this last evening that I spent alone on the 'Roof' he was dining with some foreigners. What elegance! The orchestra

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was playing 'A Waltz Dream,' there were smiles everywhere and Monsieur Florinski beat time with a knife.

Quite close to us, between this charming parricide and myself, was a sturdy Communist, crimson from head to foot. He was weeping, weeping unrestrainedly just as children do who have not yet any political opinions. He was not thinking of the pink or the red. He wept like the fool in Boris Godounov ; then he dried his eyes and smiled at life's difficulties. He will grow up and will see for himself.