RUSSIA, RED OR WHITE

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A RECORD OF A VISIT TO RUSSIA AFTER TWENTY-SEVEN YEARS

By

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To

My Son

PETER PHILIPS PRICE

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PREFACE

I HAVE often been criticised about my attitude to Russia. In 1920 the *Daily Sketch* carried my picture on the front page with the caption "Squire turns Bolshie". For I worked as a journalist in Russia before and during the Revolution, and as a result my liberal views had moved quite far to the Left. In those days I saw the Salvation of Man in the Marxist doctrine. But I have lived for thirty years since then and, though I still hold that Marxism contains an important part of the truth, I have come to realise that it is not the whole truth.

On the other hand, the land of Russia, the life of her people, their outlook, culture and history have always attracted me. Red or White, Russia has made a great contribution to the civilisation of Europe and will certainly make a great one in the future. But I left there in 1919 and I was curious to see what had happened since. As soon as the war was over I tried to go again, and eventually succeeded. I went in October 1945, with a commission to do some special articles for the *Manchester Guardian* for which I worked when I was there before. I returned in January 1946, spending a few weeks in Persia, Palestine and Egypt on the way back.

It was exciting to return to a country in which I had enjoyed living years ago and which I had last seen in the middle of a revolutionary convulsion. I felt that I should be able, possibly as few others could, to see the Russia of today in some sort of perspective.

I have set out my impressions in this book, and though I am not sure that it will satisfy the orthodox Communists, I fervently hope that the Russophobes will get no comfort.

. . . . .

Since writing the above many months have passed. The technical difficulties connected with the publication of books

have greatly delayed publication. The reader will, I hope, bear in mind that since these chapters were written much has happened. Nevertheless, on reading the text through again, I am satisfied that it gives a fair picture of Russia as I saw her emerging from the Great War with all her hopes for the future and her fears and suspicions of the West.

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" The history of the Russian people is a strange and peculiar history. Vast formless ideas haunted it from century to century, ideas of world-embracing greatness and of a righteous life. More daring, unprecedented ventures were undertaken such as dumbfounded the European world; and Europe watched with fear and anger how this eastern wonderland, both weak and mighty, both poor and immeasurably rich, brought forth, from her dark entrails, great bursts of ideas, vast enterprises of world-wide scope."

The Road to Calvary by Alexei Tolstoy.

RUSSIA, RED OR WHITE

CHAPTER I

BACK IN THE OLD HAUNTS

MY FIRST taste, or rather smell, of Russia came at the Russian airfield in Berlin. I was travelling via Germany and I drove with some sense of expectancy to the airfield. And there I waited. Everything was wonderfully Russian. Nobody knew anything and everybody was late. There was that smell of sunflower seeds that Russians love to chew. It was a bit of Russia planted down in Germany and already I began to feel quite at home. Eventually we flew off with a group of Russian officers and a nurse. Luggage was piled anyhow between the seats and nobody seemed to worry if it slid about. More luggage was heaped up against the lavatory door, but that seemed to bother nobody but me. Most people smoked, which seemed rather alarming. It did not look as if Russia had changed very much, and I decided that if Russians ever became orderly I should not be so fond of them.

We passed over great tracts of forest in East Brandenburg. The German villages seemed intact with tiny square patches of cultivated land around them. We crossed a large river, the Vistula. Everything still looked tidy. We seemed to be over Poland now. A large patch of cloud intervened and it was not for some time that I saw land again. Now it was clearly Russia. It looked as I had always known and loved it, large stretches of birch and pine forest in rough uneven areas with patches of heath and brushwood and little irregular patches of cultivated land with rows of picturesque wooden houses like scenes in a Russian fairy-tale book. We must have been crossing White Russia, probably somewhere between Minsk and Vitebsk. It began to get cold and snow

appeared on the ground. Soon we saw Moscow—masses of factories, blocks of flats and railways. Finally the golden domes of the Kremlin came in sight. On landing I was quickly passed by the airport control and there was not even a customs examination. There was the jostling crowd that one usually sees in Russia. Someone took my passport and disappeared. After half an hour someone else brought it back with a smile and soon I was on my way to the city. I was back in Russia after twenty-seven years.

On my first morning in Moscow I left the Savoy Hotel where I was staying and went for a walk. It had been snowing and a cold wind was blowing. It was a very different Moscow from the one that I remembered. With the exception of the Kremlin, it was almost unrecognisable at the centre. Its dignity had been increased by clearing away a lot of unimposing houses round the great buildings. The old Kitai Gorod, the business centre, was now the seat of public offices and municipal stores. Here was the visible sign of the end of the middle-class era and the coming of a Socialistic one. The new buildings looked as if they thought of becoming skyscrapers and then decided not. Of course, the Holy of Holies, the Kremlin, looked even more dignified than before. The Imperial Eagles were gone from the great towers at the four corners and had been replaced by giant Soviet stars which glowed at night with a friendly red. The Kremlin looked best from the south side of the river where you could see tier after tier of the golden onion-shaped cupolas of the beautiful churches inside. They were busy polishing and repairing some of the cupolas.

I next paid my respects to the monument of Pushkin where Dostoevski made his last and most famous speech at the unveiling of the memorial of that great Russian. People had been laying wreaths before it. I visited the old streets round the Arbat which I had once known well. They were almost exactly the same. This part of the city had remained untouched, but everything looked terribly dilapidated. But from enquiries I found that virtually no repairs or decorations had been done for something like ten years. For at least five years before the war the country had been preparing for the struggle, and repairs were thought less important than other urgent work.

I spent another portion of my first day visiting departments of our Embassy. I was rather impressed. When I thought of the old days in St. Petersburg, and compared the country house atmosphere in the Embassy then with that created by the active and intelligent young men, many of them from provincial universities, in our Embassy today, I was filled with hope and pleasure. In general I found a desire to try and understand the Russians and their ways, particularly at the top and at the bottom of the service. There was still something of the old atmosphere in the middle layers, emanating from a few older people who had been through the October Revolution and had not liked it. In many quarters there was a good-humouredly sceptical attitude to some aspects of Russian life and Soviet institutions, but in general there was good will. It seemed that Sir Archibald Clark Kerr, our Ambassador then, had set an admirable tone at the top which was reflected down.

I lunched at the Press and Public Relations Department of the Embassy and discussed the coming Soviet Election and the working of the Stalin Constitution, and I studied various Soviet publications and papers. Then I went to the Russian Foreign Office to present my credentials as a temporary Press Correspondent.

That evening I went to the ballet where I saw not only a good performance but what was as interesting to me, a good view of the typical Muscovites of today. I used often to go to the Grand Theatre in Tsarist times when the audience in the stalls and dress circle consisted of high State functionaries, merchants and generals. Today it was a working-class and soldiers audience. Not that there were not plenty of generals in beautiful uniforms but they mixed with the rest. Workers from factories and offices have so many tickets allotted to them every so often, and a popular interest in art seemed just as keen as in the old days. The last time I had been in this theatre was July 1918 in the early days of the October Revolution when one of the Soviet Congresses was to have been held there. That morning the Anarchists and Left Socialist Revolutionaries murdered the German Ambassador and I heard the bomb explode on my way to the theatre. Then they seized two railway stations and the Telegraph Office and tried to

get into the Kremlin and overthrow the Bolshevik Government. I found myself shut inside the theatre where I had gone to attend the Congress for nearly twelve hours without food while the Bolshevik Red Guard fought the Anarchists in the streets outside. About half-time a bomb exploded in the balcony above me. I looked at the same place again. How different the scene was today! The people's faces, though showing every sign that they had passed through great trials, were full of vigour and hope. In the intervals there was a tremendous buzz of conversation, and the parade of people marching round the corridors, which is characteristic of all Russian theatres, was as popular as ever. There were still plenty of wounded.

The audience at a Moscow theatre or opera is particularly interesting because there you see the typical Muscovites, that is the people who speak Great Russian and who live in the forests and the second-rate farming land of the north between Smolensk and the Urals. It is these people who have once more proved themselves the hard granite on which all invaders of Russia have broken. It was so with Napoleon and it has been so now with Hitler. You have only to look at these tough, stocky people of mixed Slavo-Finnish race to realise why.

CHAPTER II

THE SOVIET ELECTORAL SYSTEM

ON THE following day I made some enquiries about the working of the Soviet machinery of government. I had another talk with people in the Embassy Press Department and with Russian Foreign Office officials and it was arranged that I could interview some members of the Electoral Commission for Moscow whose job it was to go round the districts, scrutinise the electoral lists and make arrangements for the secrecy of the ballot. At their headquarters I found some young women from the Communist Party who were going off to work as " agitators " in the country round about. " What are agitators ? " I asked. Oh, they were going out to explain the General Election to the electors of a certain district. " But what explanation is needed? " I asked. " Don't the people know what the vote is about? " " That is just the point," they said. " We are going from the Moscow Communist Party to discuss the kind of people we think should be elected." " Are there only Communist candidates? " " Oh no," came the reply. " Where we are going there may be some Trade Union candidates as well who are not Communists and there may be someone nominated by a Writers' Group and possibly someone by the Red Army. They are probably all good comrades, but not members of our Party. If they have good records, we may advise the electors to nominate them and we will withdraw the Communist Party candidate."

From this conversation, and from what I heard elsewhere, I formed the opinion during my first days in Moscow that the issues at a Soviet Election are very different from those we are accustomed to in England. Nobody raises questions of principle concerning the nature of the Soviet State, which is accepted by everybody. The Foreign Policy of the Government, too, is generally accepted. There remain matters of detail concerning internal

reconstruction. Looking at the Press of that morning I found discussion going on in its columns about such things as why the local collective farmers in one area of the Moscow Province had got behind in their autumn sowing campaign and why certain local Soviets had muddled the collection of winter fuel. There were exhortations in one leading article urging that peacetime products be good in quality as well as sufficient in quantity. There was another article poking fun at excessive bureaucracy. From this, and from my conversation with the young women, I gathered that these were the sort of issues that would determine the nomination of many of the candidates at the coming Election.

There is no doubt there has been a certain competition between the Red Army and the Communist Party for moral leadership in the State and the Army has gained enormous prestige from the war. Here possibly there is an interplay of forces which prevents Soviet politics from becoming dull. In the absence of any political issues like ours, such as private or State ownership of the land and industry, Soviet elections tend to be concerned with the choice of this or that representative on the basis of his personal record, as an administrator, as an efficient factory worker, as a distinguished business manager or research worker, or as a successful officer. Unless seventy-five per cent of the electors support a candidate he is not elected and fresh nominations have to take place, and another poll. So the exciting part of a Soviet Election is not Polling Day but Nomination Day when it is decided whether Communist or non-Party candidates are adopted to stand, and when arrangements are made behind the scenes about withdrawing candidates. On Polling Day itself only one candidate appears and his need to have seventy-five per cent of the votes accounts for the tremendous drive to secure a high poll which is so difficult for us to understand in the West. As the final result of a Soviet Election there seems to come into play a balance between the interests of the Communist Party and the non-Party groups. Thus, there is a quite definite body of non-Communist opinion among the collective farmers which is perhaps more clearly expressed in the non-Party groups of the provincial Soviets than in the Central Soviet. There is a body of industrial opinion which centres around the

Trade Unions and is quite separate from, though not necessarily opposed to, the Communist Party. There are experts in industry with their own ideas on the Five Year Plan, and there are collective farmers with plans for spending money on developments in their particular region. On a smaller scale there are centres of non-Communist opinion among professional societies, scientific associations and the Church. The Orthodox Church has been recognised by the Government and has quite an appreciable following in the country. Its patriotic attitude during the war has, of course, enhanced its prestige. Finally, there is the biggest non-Communist force of all in the country—the Red Army.

Since the war the only possible competition on a large scale with the Communist Party could come from the Red Army. The officers' Corps grew influential during the war and undoubtedly did much to inculcate into the masses veneration of the exploits of the Red Army and of the great Russian military leaders of the past. It cannot be said that the Red Army has any programme which distinguishes it from the Communist Party, but there is a natural desire on their part to keep the Army in the public mind. There is also the question of the composition of future Governments. Marshal Stalin will not live for ever and there is bound to be competition for leadership one day and, although this competition may be of a quite friendly nature, it is more than probable that the Red Army leaders want the service point of view well represented in future Governments. When the results of the Election came out early in 1946, it was obvious that the Communist Party had retained the moral position it held in the country in pre-war days. None of the younger Army leaders were included in the Government and only older men like Marshal Voroshilov were given any post, and they are known to stand close to Stalin. It is clear that now the war is over, the great struggle is over internal reconstruction and the accomplishment of the new Five Year Plan. Public opinion, which undoubtedly expresses itself both within the Communist Party and in the non-Party groups referred to above, seems to feel that Communist leadership is the most competent and the most likely to be successful in dealing with the serious internal and economic problems that face the country.

How does the Soviet Parliament operate and conduct its business? It is a two-Chamber body. Whereas the Lower House is elected on a population basis, the Upper House is composed of the representatives of the States which make up the Union. But, unlike America, the States of the Soviet Union have different grades. There are States with full rights and which have twenty-five members of the Upper House, and there are autonomous regions which send only five members. There are regions with a still lower status sending only one. In this way a Tartar Autonomous Region in Central Asia is not like the State of Texas which has an equal number of members of the Senate as, say, New York. This status depends partly on population numbers and partly on the degree of cultural advancement.

There is no time fixed for the session of Parliament. During 1945 it met twice, once to pass a law on demobilisation and then again to consider the Budget. The consideration of the Demobilisation Bill lasted only one day and there was no elaborate Second and Third Reading, or Report and Committee stage. When it met to discuss the Budget it sat for a few days. A Budget Committee, something like our Ways and Means Committee, was appointed. Unlike our back-bench members of Parliament, Soviet delegates could move to increase State expenditure. While I was in Moscow I succeeded in getting hold of the Debates on these two occasions and found that its proceedings were more like a Party Conference or a Trade Union Congress in this country. There was an opening speech from a Commissar, followed by speeches of members, a summing-up and a resolution which accepted the Executives' decision. But I found that during the discussion of the Budget delegates from the Provinces actually got concessions in the form of more money to spend in their areas. In general it must be remembered that the colossal size of the Union makes Parliamentary business difficult and tends to strengthen the power of the Executive, and moreover, when one thinks of Edmund Burke's distinction between delegates and representatives, Russian M.P.s must be regarded more in the former category.

The whole set-up of the Soviet Parliament is thus quite different

to the Parliaments and Congresses of the Anglo-Saxon countries. It is in many respects in direct line of descent from the Zemsky Sobor of Russian history. Towards the end of the Rurik dynasty in the seventeenth century, and in the early Romanov times, Tsars used to summon delegates from various "Estates" to advise them on important matters of State. To this Council came the landed nobility, the merchants of the towns and the clergy. To the twentieth-century Zemsky Sobor come the nominees of the workers and peasants, to which have now been added various new elements such as the Communist intelligentsia and the various professional organisations. It is rather like a great Congress which advises the Executive on important State issues and nominally at least has vested in it the sovereignty of the Soviet Union.

CHAPTER III

THE SOVIET CITIZEN AND THE STATE

DURING the two months that I was in Russia I travelled about 4,000 miles. My centre was Moscow, but I made visits to Leningrad, Kiev, the Ukraine, and the Caucasus. A permit to live in Moscow allows you to go anywhere within a radius of eighty miles. This enabled me to visit quite a number of provincial towns and villages in the Moscow Province. I did this without being interfered with or even asked to show my passport. For long-distance travel you have to go on the railway and get billets at the other end, for Russia has come out of the war with a terribly damaged transport system and her western towns wholly or partly in ruins. So priorities for travel are only natural. The authorities eventually gave me permits to all the places I asked for. But I found that time was as plentiful a commodity as it had been in Tsarist times and the speed of work in Government Departments as comparable to the pace of a tortoise as it was when I knew Russia first.

I looked for signs of a privileged class, of which I'd heard talk. Officers of the Army and certain members of the Civil Service get cars put at their disposal and are able to buy goods at certain stores. But I did not see any signs of luxury. At State functions uniforms were magnificent, far more so than in Tsarist days, but I thought that the wives of officers and officials that I met were badly dressed and generally dowdy. This, no doubt, reflected wartime conditions. I could get no evidence of special schools for the children of this class of people. I lunched with the directors of a big factory and found them getting much the same food as was served in the workers' canteens. It is true, of course, that special foods are provided for people in special categories whose work is very exacting and of whom much is expected. It seemed that dancers and actors were in this class. If there is any privilege in

this respect, it is not the privilege of a class but the privilege of a few individuals within a class. Thus a Stakhanovite, or a worker who produces more than the average at his work, gets certain privileges and often receives more in money than the manager of his factory. A man who has distinguished himself specially by winning medals on war service also may get special food and this is a kind of recognition, of course, that we should hardly agree to here. But certainly I saw no signs of any privileged class, but rather of privileges granted to individuals for special service to the State.

There is, of course, a very large security service. The militia and the so-called N.K.V.D. guarantees a prominent place for Russia among the police states. That, of course, is in keeping with Russian tradition. Whatever the Stalin Constitution may say in practice, anything like our Habeas Corpus Act does not exist. People can be deported to live in this or that part of Russia if the secret police think it desirable. I kept on hearing of such cases, but I don't believe that it is a great factor in people's lives, for it has always been so and the average Russian is quite ready to leave to executive authority powers over the freedom of the individual which would never be tolerated by the most advanced Socialist in the West. In Russia the nation is regarded as a great family, and opposition to the father of the family in the Kremlin is akin to treason. The public interest is paramount even if it means severe restrictions on individual liberty. I think that instinctively Russians are aware of a tendency to anarchism among their people. You have only to watch the jostling crowd at the "Metro" Underground and the local fairs to realise how easily the masses in Russia can become a mob; but you have only to see the great military parade in the Red Square on the anniversary of the October Revolution and the march of the workers past the mausoleum of Lenin to realise how readily the masses submit to authority under the instinct of self-preservation and through a mystical reverence for a dead leader who brought them out of the wilderness. It is the Byzantine theocratic tradition of the nation a great family which differentiates Russia from the Western world. Indeed that applies to all that part of Eastern Europe which either

accepts the Russian form of Communism or Orthodox Christianity. The influence of the Reformation and the recognition of the value of personal liberty never came to Russia and this, I think, accounts for much even in the present day.

Can a foreigner meet Russian people in their homes? Certainly he can if he goes the right way to work about it. Of course, he can always arrange to be shown officially over workers' flats, but in that way he won't learn much. It takes time to get into private houses, but if he has acquaintance he can manage to do so, though not perhaps as freely as was the case in Tsarist times. In my case, I found I was always asked in when I called. For instance, I went to visit the son of someone whom I lived with once in Moscow, now a teacher of English at the University. I found him living in the Arbat at the top of a block of flats with a sister. Life was not easy for them and it had been worse. During the war they had almost starved, but they were now getting just enough food. Being a head worker his rations were in a low category. Clothes were almost unobtainable and everyone had to repair and mend what they had worn for years. I found in this family a general belief that times would improve and that Russia would progress, but coupled with this a vague fear that Russia might be attacked again and all their patient work destroyed for the fourth time in a generation. After all, Russia has been invaded twice by the Germans in 1918 and 1941 and once by the Poles in 1920. It had clearly become almost an obsession with them that once more this bad dream might come true. I sat with them at tea before a samovar with a dry rusk and very little sugar. How poor life was now compared to the spacious days of the Empire when Nicolas II ruled Russia. Yet how good life might have been now if the constructive work of Russia's citizens had not been ruined every few years by a foreign invasion. I felt that this was in the back of their minds, as it is in the minds of millions of other Russians.

Housing conditions in cities like Moscow were pretty grim. But the accepted standard of comfort in Russia is lower than with us. Families are ready to live in one room and not complain as they would with us. The problem of building new houses to cover the housing shortage does not seem to be regarded as No. 1

priority. Very little new building seemed to be going on in Moscow. There was a good deal of repair work in progress, but there has been little war damage and the work was mainly making good years of dilapidations. There was tremendous overcrowding in Moscow due to a large influx of Government offices and lack of new buildings. But plans for extensive housing schemes, mostly workers' flats, were in preparation. For the moment, Moscow was taking breath after the war effort prior to a big reconstruction drive.

I was interested to find out about the direction of labour. During the war something like an Essential Works Order was in operation and it was operated in conjunction with military service, a man being exempt from service if he worked at certain jobs. Today this form of direction has gone. The people were quite free to choose their type of occupation, but once a man was in a job, such as engineering, mining or the civil service, he was expected to go where he was directed. If he did not, there were various sanctions that could be applied, such as lowering his ration category, and so on. Actually, I do not believe such sanctions are used much, for Russians are quite prepared to accept direction of this sort from above. People whom I asked what would happen if a man was directed from Moscow to work in North-East Siberia, shrugged their shoulders and said, " Well, the Government knows best where we can most usefully work." Actually, there has been considerable movement of the population since the war which has somewhat embarrassed the Government. Owing to the German invasion a very large section of the population evacuated to Western Siberia and Central Asia and industries were brought there. It was part of the Government plans to keep some of this population in this part of Asiatic Russia. But at the end of the war there was an uncontrolled rush back to their homes in the west which has interfered with plans for the future siting of the industry. All this tends to show that the Government is not so all-powerful as is believed and often has a difficult task in controlling mass movements of this kind.

The power which the Executive exercises over the citizen in Russia as compared with the West raises the question of the

efficiency of the machinery of government. You naturally tend to form your opinion from your own experiences. I had to deal with the Foreign Office and, although I was most courteously treated, and in the end got all that I asked for, the expenditure of time and energy to attain it was prodigious. No senior official ever seemed to turn up before midday and then work went on spasmodically, but often at high pressure, till well after midnight. Moreover, what struck me most was that there was never any delegation of responsibility to juniors in the departments and nobody there to take over if the senior happened to be away at a long conference. If I made an appointment to see a senior through one of the juniors, the latter would never tell the person on duty after him what had happened or what appointments had been made during the period of his duty, and consequently I arrived at my appointment without anybody knowing anything about me and I had to start all over again. Sometimes muddles like this would waste days. Nobody in Russia had a sense of time, and here again there is no change since Tsarist times. The general public and the lower grades of the civil service have very little idea of how to do a job without friction or waste of time. It is, I think, the result of their having so recently been freed from serfdom and of the long industrial backwardness of Russia. On the other hand, I did observe that the higher ranks of the bureaucracy were definitely more efficient than in Tsarist times, that they knew what they wanted and did give drive to the State machine and at least tried to remove grievances which the old Government never bothered to do. It is, of course, the Communist Party of Russia which largely inspires the senior ranks of the civil service. It keeps Russia together and gives it a Government of a sort. But to attain its objectives it has to employ far more people far longer to do the same work than would be the case in Western Europe. The Communist Party is, in fact, today doing what Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great did in their day. Without it Russia would fall apart in chaos. But it seems as if it will take several generations before businesslike habits are acquired by the Russian public.

One incident occurred to me which illustrates what can happen

in Russia. Before I arrived in Moscow the foreign Press had protested against the censorship and asked for greater freedom in the treatment of articles and news. After a long delay this request was peremptorily turned down. Soon after I arrived, however, I noted that something was going on in the Press Department of the Foreign Office. For five days I could contact no responsible official. Only junior clerks were there who did not know, or said they did not know, where their superiors were. On the sixth day a plane was leaving for England and I was anxious to get an article censored and sent off by it. So I tried again. Once more there was no responsible official at the Foreign Office Press Department, but one of the young ladies, a junior clerk, formally censored it for me and I got it off. In the intervening days, apparently, conferences had been held at which it was decided to agree to the foreign Press request to liberalise the censorship but nobody was told. We were left to guess. And from that day until I left Russia the censorship was little more than formal. It has since become more severe again, partly because some of the foreign Press correspondents abused their freedom. But it is clear from this incident that the machinery of government in Russia works by slow and devious means. In this particular respect it shows how fond the Russians are of the Asiatic habit of not losing face. They bluntly refuse something and then grant it without admitting they have done so. Foreign correspondents often cannot understand this sort of thing and get exasperated at the waste of time and energy. Explosions occur and the correspondent leaves Russia disgruntled and bitter. But it is useless to come to a country and expect to find it just like your own. In my case I knew what to expect because I had known Russia before. I admit that my task was easier than some of the Moscow correspondents because I was setting out to get impressions for feature articles, while most of the others were tied to their rooms in the Hotel Metropole telephoning or poring over newspapers for the latest " hot news ". Hence little time was left to sit on the Foreign Office doorstep and pester officials, as I did, till I got what I wanted. In this respect the London editors have something to answer for, for not telling their men in Moscow to get about and write feature articles of journeys to the Provinces.

In general it can be said that, while the State bureaucracy in Russia is cumbersome and not efficient by Western standards, and must take a large slice of the national income, it certainly takes less than it did in Tsarist times. Moreover, there is now no landed nobility to take a large share of the income of the peasantry. On balance, a much larger share of the national income obviously goes to public development than was the case in former times.

CHAPTER IV

FOOD PROBLEMS AND FAIRS

HOW ARE Russians paid for their labour and what does payment actually amount to in material value? Office and factory labour is paid according to a complicated scheme of salaries combined with rationing categories. The wages in factories are fixed by agreements between the Trade Unions and the management of the State trusts. But two men's wages, which may be the same in nominal amount, in effect may have different purchasing power. There are four categories for food rations. Each worker has his category according to the kind of work he is doing. Therefore it becomes impossible to compare the wages of the Russian worker with those of the British. First of all, it is almost impossible to translate rouble values into sterling. There is the official rate and there are two or three non-official rates which are quite legal, like the diplomatic rate, the commercial rate, etc. At the official rate Russian prices in sterling would be enormously high and the wage extremely low. But at the other rates it would be quite different and much nearer to that of Western Europe. Then there are different categories for food rations. Thus a heavy worker like a miner or blast furnace man gets a high ration category and in that respect he is better off than a man who works in a light industry or is in an office. The lowest ration goes to the retired person and pensioner, as happens in other countries besides Russia.

But the standard of living of the Soviet worker is affected by another factor. There are first his wages, then his food category, and thirdly there is his ability to purchase on the open market. This is a perfectly legal way in which he is able to supplement his rations. An extra piece of meat, more eggs, some cheese or butter, and in general those little additions to the ordinary rations which

make all the difference—all these are available to the Soviet worker if he can afford them. In this respect there is greater freedom of purchase than in present-day Britain. I estimated that some categories of Russian workers spent about a third of their wages in buying three quarters of their food on the rations at fixed, low prices. The remaining quarter of his food (the little luxury addition) costs him perhaps another third or even half his wages. He would pay about four times more for meat on the open market than on the ration. Needless to say the lower income groups can buy very little on the open market, but a successful Stakhanovite worker, or anyone who does heavy physical work, can buy quite a lot.

The Commissariat of Food has its stores in all the principal towns and cities. There are no private stores or groceries, and the co-operative societies seems to be confined to the villages and the smaller provincial towns. There are other municipal stores run by the Urban Soviet. All these are well-appointed places, and in Moscow, Leningrad and the principal centres they could almost be compared with Harrods and Selfridges minus the furniture and hardware. But in addition to this, the State itself takes an interest in the open market by having stores which sell food at the free prices, thus competing with the side-street bazaars and provincial fairs. This open market is used by the Government as a means of taxing that element of the population which is earning good money. Thus, Stakhanovite workers, successful actors or authors can make large sums of money and on paper may be very rich. But they cannot invest their money in industrial shares or real estate. There is little property that they can buy except a house and garden for themselves, extra food and personal goods on the open market. As the prices here are very much higher than the prices of the same articles on the ration cards at the Government stores, this system in effect works like a tax on the higher incomes, returning to the coffers of the State a lot of the currency issued to the higher-income earners.

On the other side of the picture come the collective farmers or peasants. They have to deliver to the Commissariat of Food a certain quantity of their produce, the amount being assessed

according to the average yield per acre over a period of five years. This tax in kind provides the basis of the rationing system. But after the collective farm had made its deliveries to the Commissariat, the balance is distributed to the farmers individually and they can use it themselves or sell it on the open market. Thus, there has come into existence a series of local markets or fairs arranged in the provincial towns and large villages generally on a Sunday morning, and to these come peasants, bringing their surplus products, and factory workers, office staffs and the lower grades of the civil service who come by train to attend the market and buy their extras. Thus, there is a certain competition between these Government stores dealing in the open market and the local fairs.

I went to visit some of them and generally travelled about in the towns within eighty miles of Moscow. Thus, one Sunday morning, I went by train to Zagorsk, the place where the famous Troitsky Sergievsky monastery stands. The massive walls of its ancient Kremlin had seen many memorable events in Muscovite history. From these gates came forth the army of Dimitri Donskoy after being blessed by the Abbot St. Sergius before they went out to the west to defeat the Tartars at the battle of Kulikovo in 1380. And here beneath these walls I found a picturesque gathering of peasants and townsfolk bargaining and haggling over their chickens, cheese, jugs of milk, eggs and sausages. Close by was a little teashop or " Chainaya ". I went in and ordered something to eat and drink. Soon a number of people got round me noticing that I was a foreigner and for the next half-hour I had to answer numerous questions about life in Britain. In those days they were greatly impressed to hear that we had not rationed bread. I talked with a number of railway men and some workers of the local toy factory which had been making munitions and was now back on toys. They said they had had a hard time. The Germans got to within fifty miles of Zagorsk and at times they had very little to eat. Their food, they said, now consisted of brown bread, potatoes and a porridge of millet seed (" Kasha "). They got two pounds of meat a month and occasionally supplemented on the open market. They got about one pound of bread

a day on the cards. I noticed that the diet in this northern part of Russia was distinctly on the starchy side but that is in keeping with the cold climate and the people can get on quite well as long as they have plenty of potatoes and millet or buck wheat, all of which is grown locally in the open tracts of cultivated land between the large blocks of forests.

I walked out into the countryside round Zagorsk in spite of much slush and autumn mud. I went to find a little lake that I remembered when I came last to Zagorsk in 1918. There had been a little boathouse there, and a wagtail used to make its nest under the eaves. But the lake was now drained and enclosed, and nearby was a small leather factory. There had been changes in those years and I could see that the once sleepy provincial town had now become a considerable centre of small industry. I returned to the shadow of the monastery walls. Those same walls had in the year 1600 successfully withstood the Polish-Lithuanian armies when Prince Pozharsky, Citizen Menin and the Patriarch Hermogene had held up the pillars of the young Muscovite State and had overcome the anarchy of the " troublous times ". This old monastery had indeed seen many great events in Russian history.

I made another expedition from Moscow a couple of Sundays later. It was a bitter cold day with a north wind blowing and occasional light snow falling. I decided to risk the discomfort and visit Dmitrov, a place where I used to go to forage for food in the summer of 1918 when I was living with the Tolstoys in Moscow. Dmitrov itself is a small provincial town of perhaps 30,000 population lying near the upper reaches of the Volga. The train journey down was uneventful, the train was not too full and the carriage windows were fortunately not smashed as was often the case. On the way I looked out on the very pleasant North Russian countryside. It was particularly attractive after the line began to go down through little valleys carved by streams flowing into the upper Volga. There was scattered forest and scrub alternating with patches of cultivation. Muscovite villages with their collective farms were situated mostly on the higher ground. It was typical of the medium farming land of North Central Russia. On this winter's day the higher ground looked bleak but the little dells

were beautiful with their birch groves, with glimpses of wooden houses and tiny meadows and an occasional wooden church. The main difference I noticed in the villages compared to the time when I last saw them were large collective farm buildings and also the fact that the churches now seemed dilapidated and unused. Nearer to my destination the line crossed the large Moscow-Volga Canal which had been cut since I was there last.

On arrival at Dmitrov I walked about the town. It had not changed much. The houses were the same old wooden ones, many of them quite picturesque with their carved shutters, dormer windows and wooden shingles on the roof. I could not find a single church that seemed to be in use. All were dilapidated and some were falling down. But I gathered that church services were being carried on in some of the larger houses. There are signs that once there was an old monastery here. There were fragments of a Kremlin wall with a corner tower. The old Government house, the seat of the Governor appointed by the Tsar, was now occupied by the local Soviet. I saw signs of " Socialist competition in the villages ". In the square before Government House there was posted up a list of collective farms and their managers' names who had passed a certain standard of efficiency in cultivation and production per acre. There were about fifteen names on the list.

I found a large open market in the big square. To this market had come large numbers of people from Moscow, apparently by an earlier train than mine. The same sort of people were there as I had noticed in the market in Zagorsk. The scene was almost like an oriental bazaar and just like I remembered it in the old days, even complete with beggars and holy men. In a corner, for instance, sat a ragged old man singing folk songs with a metallic voice to a tune which can be heard in any bazaar from Samarkhand to Bagdad. It was just as if I were among the Tartars. Certainly Djenghiz Khan had left his mark on some people in Russia. In another corner someone was singing about the Orthodox Saints and crossing himself. People gave him money and crossed themselves too. He was apparently half-witted and consequently, according to Russian custom, stood nearer to God and was

worthy of some veneration. I passed on and saw that the market was giving the people a full opportunity to exercise their love of bargaining and beating down or running up prices to their own advantage, cracking jokes and using that incomparable fund of native wit, often rather pawky, which is such a characteristic of the Russian peasant. One word will often convey an idea which would take five words in English. Here you can see the native Russian spirit which loves to talk and bargain. In this respect it is very individualistic. Everyone was looking after himself and the devil was taking the hindermost. I saw some Red Army soldiers trying to buy some meat off a tough and stocky peasant woman and hoping to beat down her price.

" How much a pound do you want, little Mother ? " said one.

" Thirty roubles a pound," she replied.

" You are not worth that yourself," said one of the soldiers.

After that I could not gather what was said in a torrent of invective and the soldiers retired with no meat. It always seems to me that Russians are prepared to accept very rigid Government direction in the instinctive knowledge that it is for the good of all that it should be so. But once the obligation to the State has been discharged, once they are free to trade and barter, they do so with tremendous gusto, like their fathers did before them. They doubtless displayed the same enjoyment of freedom in Peter the Great's day after he had dragooned them as much as he felt necessary for the safety of Russia. Russians in fact accept dictation and authority as long as the powers in the Kremlin give them some safety valve. I think I saw one of these safety valves on that Sunday morning in Dmitrov.

I remembered twenty-seven years ago when I came down occasionally to Dmitrov that I used to go to a village to buy food about one and a half miles outside the town. At that time you weren't allowed to buy food outside the rations. But because I was hungry I went out with a sack or " Meshok " and thus became a " Meshoshnik " or sack-carrier. You always ran the risk of getting the contents of the sack confiscated by Red guards at the railway station. In these days the Bolshevik Government was carrying on

a war against the " Kulaks " or well-to-do peasants who hired labour, hoarded food and sold at high prices. I remember the " Committees of Poor Peasants " in each village which became, at least in this part of Russia, divided against itself. The peasant I visited was not a Kulak but he was not poor, the middle type, in fact, who delivered most of his produce to the State but did a little illicit trading as well.

I decided to walk out to that village and see what it looked like now. I went over an undulating frozen road with snow drifts piled up at the side. The landscape looked arctic but I observed the village in the distance and was spurred on to see it again after all these years. There it was, just as I remembered it, two rows of houses along a rough dirt track. A few new houses had been built but otherwise there had been little outward change. The house of the peasant I knew was still there but I made no further inquiries. Farther up the street a signpost outside a house indicated the village Soviet building, and farther away were the buildings of the collective farm, housing cattle and the year's grain stores. Here was a change indeed from twenty-seven years ago, when there was no central farm and everyone had their little sheds attached to their houses and long ribbonlike strips of land scattered about all over the place, which were redistributed every few years. It was indeed a most unbusinesslike and inefficient method of farming. In those days the village had been full of suspicion and rumour; neighbour suspected neighbour and each man's hand was against his brother. It must have been like that during the years following the death of Ivan the Terrible when each community of Muscovy was divided between supporters of Boris Godunov and the various Pretenders. Today the question of authority in the Kremlin was settled. The village was a family once more. There was the local Soviet and there was the collective farm. There was probably rivalry too. But friction of the kind I once saw was gone. I went to the house of the village Soviet and knocked at the door. The wife of the secretary came out and I told her who I was and showed my Moscow pass. Her husband was out but she asked me to come in. She gave me a cup of tea to warm me up on my walk back. As usual I was asked

many questions about life in England and could have stayed much longer chatting but darkness was coming on.

I looked out across the countryside. Part of the village straggled up a small hillside, looking like a collection of wooden doll's houses, half covered in snow. There were clumps of birch trees, those inevitable thin white sentinels of the North Russian plain. In the little dells, where streams flow down to the lower Volga, were copses of spruce trees and little meadows, just the sort of place that the Russian artist, Nesterov, loved to paint and where, according to Russian legend, St. Sergius lived with a tame bear in a hut by a wooden shrine. I turned from this scene to face my walk back to Dmitrov in the face of a bitter north-east wind and driving snow. It was an ordeal but it was worth it.

I got back to the railway station. Here in the booking hall in October 1918 I had bought a Moscow paper announcing the break-up of the German Army in South-East Europe and stating in emphatic terms that the World Revolution had begun. In the form the Bolshevik leaders were expecting it, the World Revolution has not come. Instead, bullet marks on the station walls indicated the struggle with the Germans who in the early days of the war reached the outskirts of Dmitrov.

The train came in. A huge crowd wished to board it. They consisted mostly of people who had come from Moscow earlier in the day to attend the market and were now returning with their purchases. I was able to get on the train and was even lucky enough to get a seat, but I had to sit for three and a half hours cramped up in a corner of the carriage unable to move, in darkness and at times hardly able to breathe. Every conceivable article bought at the market was dragged into the carriage. There were large sacks of potatoes sticking in my neck, great baskets of cabbages round my feet; some brought in live fowls periodically flapping about, and then someone tried to bring in a live goat! This was too much for my fellow-passengers. I was not able to understand all the torrent of oaths that accompanied the attempt to introduce the goat, but its owner was in any case forced to retire. Whether it ever got to Moscow I could never find out.

I reached Moscow just in time to go to a concert at the Trade Union Hall, at which an excellent performance was given of Rachmaninoff's *Francesca da Rimini*. In the passages depicting the descent of Dante and Virgil into the first region of Hell I was forcibly reminded of my train journey back from Dmitrov that afternoon!

CHAPTER V

DUAL PERSONALITY

I NOTICED when I was in Russia this time that people did not seem to be so argumentative as they used to be. As I saw them last in the days of the Revolution I probably noticed a greater contrast. They used to argue a lot on abstract subjects. I used to spend evenings in old Petrograd and Moscow discussing such subjects as the Slavophil and Western school, Marxism, Popularism or Nihilism, Russian music and art, the influence of Greek culture on Russia and so on. One of the reasons why Russians aren't so much in their homes today is, I think, that they are busier—I know the higher grades of the Civil Service certainly are. Hence perhaps they are less argumentative. But this seems to make no difference to the Russian love of books and reading. The demand for publications of all kinds is insatiable and only a fraction of the demand can be met. Reading was pretty widespread in Russia even in Tsarist days in spite of illiteracy, but it was confined mostly to the townspeople who were great book readers and knew their Tolstoy, Dostoevski and Pushkin well. This was true not only of the intelligentsia. Today this same class reads as much as before, but nowadays the villagers read as well. Formerly only a few peasants were literate. Now illiteracy is almost unknown and consequently the demand for reading matter is many times greater than it used to be. But the war and the paper shortage has led to a great dearth of books and publications.

A few days after I arrived in Moscow I went strolling in the "Kuznetskoye Most", the street where the bulk of the bookshops are. These shops incidentally are either State or Municipal owned or belong to the Communists. Of course, Party literature was very much to the fore and such books as the *History of the*

Russian Communist Party were being sold in considerable numbers. This is an interesting book but is not too truthful in its account of the October Revolution. On the other hand, it has a very good summary of the early history of the revolutionary movement in Russia. Lenin's and Stalin's works are also on sale everywhere. The State Publishing Department issues these books at a special low price. On the other hand, there are quite a number of shops where there are no Communist books at all and who specialise in technical publications. These are numerous and cheap and the shops are well patronised. The youth of Russia is eagerly learning to build houses, bridges, railways, irrigation works and learn the latest in physical and chemical research. The new Russian religion, the conquest of Matter by Mind and the triumph of Man over his material surroundings is being assiduously taught to young Russians.

When we come to the realm of fiction I found that certain modern writers, like Constantin Simonov, were being widely read. Their novels were mostly realistic pictures of the hard times through which Russia has just passed. Russians do not seem to mind reading about this, for they are a people of tough nerves and can take anything. Sholokhov's novels about the Revolution and the civil war and Alexei Tolstoy's great trilogy, *The Road to Calvary*, were in colossal demand. But I could hardly buy anything, as everything was always sold out. I went from shop to shop in despair. Kiosks had nothing but a few miserable women's fashion publications. Finally a Russian friend in a Government Department kindly arranged to get me the books I wanted, direct from the State Publishing Bureau.

But if many people were reading realistic accounts of the recent trials, there seemed an equally large number who wanted relief from the war and from the new drive for material reconstruction. Thus, some shops specialised in that best brand of all escapism—the great Russian classics. They were all there and in terrific demand—Pushkin, Turgenev, Lermontov and Tolstoy. I had heard that Dostoevski was out of favour with the authorities because he was too religious but I did not find that that was so. After a search I was able to buy a volume of Dostoevski's diaries

for thirty-five roubles. But nearly everything was second-hand. New editions of the Russian classics were being printed, but swallowed up at once in the insatiable maw of the Russian reading public. The English classics were also very popular. It seemed as if the Russian public could not get enough of Shakespeare and Dickens. Those literary pundits of the Russian Communist Party, whom I met, thought our modern writers, with the exception of Priestley, too indecisive and uncertain for their liking. That was, of course, due to our "capitalist decadence". But I had the impression that this explanation was a little too simple. I could reply, "*tu quoque*". The Russians were tumbling over each other to read their classics. Moreover, three quarters of the repertoire of the opera and stage consisted of the works of the giants of classical times, like Pushkin, Tschaikovsky, Gogol, and Borodin. Continual performances were being given of the great masterpieces of the past like *Eugen Onegin*, the *Queen of Spades*, *Boris Godunov* and *Prince Igor*. All this seemed to show that the Russian public wanted something more than their own modern writers and composers. Since the death of Alexei Tolstoy, and with the exception of Sholokhov, it is doubtful if any of the modern Soviet writers will go down in history. It looks as if the soul of the Russian people is best satisfied by the interplay of personalities and the love of Life as displayed in the Russian classics.

We in the West may be suffering from a decadent capitalism and our modern fiction may be a reflection of the uncertainty about the way we are going. But if this is so, then I think that Russia is suffering from the opposite, namely an over-confident self-assertiveness which is really the cloak for an inferiority complex. This really hides a weakness, and the censorship is probably there to give a guidance which the public is thought to need. For in the set-up in Russia today the censorship has a paternal control over everything the people read in the way of books and pamphlets. It does not make for literary inspiration when a writer is forced to have in mind what the gentlemen in the Kremlin are likely to think about his book when he has finished it. He starts writing when the censorship line is going in one direction. But by

the time he has finished the line may have changed. The historian Tarle recently wrote a long and important work on the Crimean War. It was thought that he stressed too much the national issues and not enough the social and class issues running at that time in Russia. The book was by way of being banned, but a copy was got through to a certain high personage who read it and liked it. After that all was well. Again, when Alexei Tolstoy's play, *Ivan the Terrible*, was first acted in the Little Theatre in Moscow, there was trouble because it was thought to show Ivan as a nervous and excitable person and not dignified enough for a Russian Tsar! The offending scene was altered and the play appeared.

There are, of course, compensating factors. There is a Society of Authors which stands up to the censorship and often gets its way. I met a Ukrainian writer who had overcome censorship difficulties by explanation and discussions. Also there appears to be a wide freedom of subjects for discussion as long as unorthodox views are not spread about in print. I met one junior civil servant who had not long come from the University and he told me that students had been discussing in debating societies such questions as "Christianity and Marxism" and he said that a number of students had taken the side of Christianity.

By and large, however, I think it can be said that the censorship adversely affects the quality of modern Russian literature. It seems to be part of Government policy to prevent the Russian public from getting to know too much about Western Europe and America. The authorities are undoubtedly trying to rouse national spirit in the Russian people, to make them proud of their achievements in the war and to brace them up for the colossal task of post-war reconstruction. Hence their persistent depreciation of everything foreign, which is exactly the reverse of what I remember when I was in Russia before the Revolution. In those days they were always saying that Russia was "dark and backward" and must learn from the rest of the world. But the pendulum has come back full swing and we are in a period of intensive Russian nationalism. Russia, in fact, may be entering upon one of those moods of intellectual isolation which she has had before in her history, both during the pre-Petrine era and occasionally

since. That, to my mind, partly explains the censorship and the desire to prevent the Russian people from getting to know the outer world or coming under any outside influences. Deep down there seems to be a fear that Russians will become despondent if they see that their standards of living are lower than those of Great Britain and the United States. The myth must be kept up that we are a mass of downtrodden slaves, ground by a handful of capitalists in the City of London! And there is no question about it that many of the rulers of Russia believe this implicitly, and even though some of them know better, it is State policy that this view should be held by the public. On the other hand, we must never forget that freedom for the individual to write what he likes has never existed in Russia except during the brief Kerensky regime in 1917. All the great masters of the Russian classical age wrote under the eye of a censorship. But the difference between the Tsarist and the Soviet censorship is that the former was inefficient and the latter is not.

The question whether the Russian authorities want intellectual contact between their people and the West cannot be altogether answered in the negative. While the policy of the censorship and the anti-Western campaign in press and radio seems to suggest that isolation is preferred, there is in Moscow and in all the capitals of the Republics of the Union an organisation called "Vox" which on paper exists to establish cultural relations between Russia and the outside world. I made acquaintance with it in Moscow and later in Kiev and Baku. It exists to show foreigners something of the cultural life of Russia and also to explain to the Russians something about the cultural life of other countries. For my part, I found that the former function seemed to be the best and the most effectively carried out. As for the latter, my impression was that foreign countries were seen too much through Russian spectacles, and narrow ones at that.

My first contact with "Vox" was when they invited me to see some films, including the magnificent *Ivan the Terrible*, Part I, produced by Eisenstein. At tea, later, I met two of the "Vox" ladies, one very intelligent and the other a typical Communist Party hack. While discussing the film, one of them said how much

she liked the great scenes of the coronation of Ivan in the cathedral at the Kremlin, and the pomp and beauty of the Orthodox Church service. "I am not a believer myself," she said, "but I often go to church to hear the beautiful singing and enjoy the atmosphere."

Again, a few days later, I attended a reception at "Vox" in honour of Swift's bi-centenary. A number of eminent Russian authors were there including Professors Morosov and Djevelevov. Short addresses were given on Swift's life and works. Mr. Roberts, the British Minister, who was there, was then asked to say a few words which he did most diplomatically, and then I was asked to say something. This gave me a chance to show off my Russian. I said that the last time I was in Russia I had found that every Russian knew all about Oscar Wilde but that I knew next to nothing. I learned about Oscar Wilde from Russians and was apparently doing the same thing now about Swift.

Afterwards we had a stand-up supper where I met Mr. Eisenstein. We discussed his films, *Alexander Nevsky* and *Ivan the Terrible*. He told me that, as regards the latter, he wanted to show that Ivan was not just a monster of iniquity but that there was some reason for his occasionally cruel actions in the intrigues and conspiracies hatched against him in his early days by the Boyars and people round the Court. He said one had to consider the social conditions of Russia at that time in order to form a correct appreciation of Ivan's character.

Then I met one of the editors of *Pravda* who began by a little compliment to me on my Russian. We then got down to brass tacks, in this case the Belsen trials; he said he was surprised that there were any lawyers in England to defend Nazis. I said I presumed that even Trotskyists were allowed to find Soviet lawyers to defend them at their trials. Then I told him of my experiences in Russia during the October Revolution and found that he did not seem to realise that there had been Englishmen in those days who had defended the Soviet. The only man who gets any recognition in that respect is John Reed, no doubt because of his popular book, *Ten Days that Shook the World*.

I met a number of other Soviet writers and found the atmosphere very much like that with the old Russian intelligentsia in

pre-Revolution days. They were not hardbitten Marxists, although they doubtless recognised Marxism as the official secular religion of modern Russia. They were typical Russians in that they were asking about problems of the world and of life without any bias or prejudice, and here I seemed to notice a difference between them and the new Russian Communist intelligentsia. Certainly on that evening I found that the old Russian intelligentsia with all its faults and virtues still exists and was even being patronised by "Vox". Of course, official Communist watchdogs were there to keep an eye on all this but I felt that even they were being influenced by the old atmosphere.

It was on this evening that I met the widow of the late Count Alexei Tolstoy, a young and very charming lady. She told me that her husband had finished his great work, *The Road to Calvary*, on the day the Germans attacked Russia in 1941. She said that the Russian peasants have a legend that the Virgin Mary comes to earth to find how much the people of the world are suffering. She said that her husband took this legend and applied it to the story of the sufferings of the Russian intelligentsia during the years of the First World War and the Revolution. This book is probably the biggest work that has appeared in Russia in recent years and is of a somewhat similar character to his famous namesake's *War and Peace*.

Towards the end of my stay in Moscow I went to tea with the Director of " Vox ", Mr. Kamenov. He was a broadminded type of Russian Communist intellectual. Conversation drifted to the different conceptions of democracy in Britain and Russia and I put it to him that personal liberty and the right of an individual to voice unpopular views were essential cornerstones to our democracy. He said he could not understand why we had freed Fascists like Sir Oswald Mosley and I told him we could not deprive a man of liberty because we did not like what he said, but only for what he did. Of course for incitement to riot or on suspicions of fifth-column activity, in times of grave national crisis, we would deprive a man of liberty; but he would have to be released the moment the crisis was passed. Mr. Kamenov said that I was hair-splitting and that the expression of ideas hostile to the

workers must in the long run lead to action against them and should not be tolerated. I replied that we in England felt that we were strong enough not to be afraid of public criticism of our institutions. Did they not then feel strong enough in Russia to stand criticism too? We could only agree to differ and it was clear to me that our British view and the Russian view of democracy were fundamentally different.

My talk with Mr. Kamenov was disturbing and I was upset by the deep gulf between us. For some time I could not interpret it. Then I thought that Dostoevski might perhaps supply an answer and my mind wandered to *The Brothers Karamazov* and to Ivan's famous legend of the *Grand Inquisitor*. I have always felt that Dostoevski interpreted very acutely the dilemma that has plagued so many Russian minds from the earliest times till today. What is the highest Truth and Value in Life? What is the secret of Perfection? Or in terms of the modern world: can Mankind find happiness in Democracy? What indeed is Democracy? We interpret it one way, the Russians another. Why? Perhaps Dostoevski gives us a clue.

In the legend, the Grand Inquisitor of Spain discovers to his horror that Christ has come back to earth, teaching, blessing and healing once more. He orders his immediate arrest, visits him in prison and says to him, "We have corrected Thy work and have founded it on miracle, mystery and authority. And men rejoice that they are led again like sheep and that Thy terrible gift that has brought them suffering is lifted from their hearts. Instead of freedom of thought and liberty of speech, which only leads to anarchy, the Holy Church imposes doctrine and authority. Humanity abandons free choice and places itself in the hands of the Infallible, the mastermind that assures happiness to all who obey His will." The Grand Inquisitor alone is unhappy, because he guards the secret of Life and knows in his heart of hearts that even he does not understand it. And the Grand Inquisitor decides to burn Christ at the stake for daring to interfere with the authority of his own Church. Finally he relents, opens the prison door and Christ disappears never to return.

Dostoevski dissects the problems that scourge the Russian

mind; in his novels the characters like Roskolnikov, Stavrogin and Ivan Karamazov have split personalities—the conscious self which accepts the existence of Goodness and Truth and seeks to attain it, and the unconscious self which doubts its existence and alleges that self-will is supreme and that there is no moral law. But if there is no God, then each individual is God, once he realises that fact. This type of dual personality can be found among individuals everywhere but, what is more important in the modern world is that it exists even more among nations than individuals. It is very strong among Russians as a community. Thus, on the one hand, there is the Orthodox Church which stands for the belief that Man, though a responsible agent and capable of making his own decisions, is subject to the Divine Will. That is one Russia. Then there is the other Russia of the Communist Party which holds that Man has his destiny in his own hand and can achieve it collectively by the conquest of his material surroundings. Thus, Russia has today a dual personality and in her unstable condition the Commissars in the Kremlin, like the Grand Inquisitor, seeking material happiness for the Russian people, feel deep down in their consciousness that the masses cannot in the last resort be left to think for themselves. They must not be exposed to knowledge of the outer world or they would suffer and their happiness would vanish. They must accept authority, the authority of the new secular church, founded on the doctrine of Karl Marx and guarded by the temporal leaders of the State, who say, as the Grand Inquisitor said to Christ, " The people have given us their right to free will and we guarantee them happiness."

When I thought of this I began to see why Mr. Kamenov and I could not agree on our interpretation of the meaning of democracy. And I was amazed also at the foresight of Dostoevski who, sixty-five years ago, could see the dilemma that would face his countrymen in the twentieth century.

CHAPTER VI

OLD FAITHS AND NEW

ONE SUNDAY morning I pushed my way through the dense congregation of the Orthodox Cathedral of Yelohofskaya in Moscow. It was composed of both sexes and of all ages. Red Army men were there, but no officers above the rank of lieutenant. The chanting of the choir and the intoning of the priests ebbed and flowed, the congregation crossed itself and bowed as waves of emotion swept over it. A priest stepped out into the midst of the congregation. There was no pulpit; he was just *primus inter pares*. He preached about the woman with the sick son in the Gospel story and spoke of the need for endurance in time of trouble and for belief in ultimate goodness. His words went home, and I saw parents with moist eyes who doubtless had sons that were never going to return.

At the end of the service I saw, as I used to see in Russia in the old days, members of the congregation turn to each other and embrace, even though they might be complete strangers. Scenes like this illustrate that Russians fundamentally feel that the whole nation is a great family. They may jostle each other at the railway stations, they may drive hard bargains with each other at fairs, but even those that don't go to church seem to accept that after all they are " all members one of another ". They have a word—" sobornost "—which is very difficult to translate but is an abstract noun conveying the meaning of " being all together in a community ". From it comes the word " sobor " which can be used to mean either a cathedral or a place of common assembly. The service of the Russian Orthodox Church is so arranged that everyone stands where they like. The whole congregation is one and it would be entirely foreign to their ideas that anyone should have a reserved place.

I passed out into the snowy streets and icy winds. There was the old faith of Russia still being practised in anything from one quarter to one third of the churches that there used to be in Moscow. Tolerance of the old religion by the new is the order of the day, and I am convinced it is quite genuine. The relations between Church and State are much healthier in Russia than they have been for several centuries. The Church now has the spiritual independence that it used to have before the Petrine era.

In order to get some first-hand information, I arranged to see a High Dignitary of the Russian Orthodox Church and was received by him in the patriarchal offices near the Arbat. Here I found an atmosphere of bustle, with priests and important people of the church coming and going. A sitting of the Holy Synod was fixed for that morning. I was introduced to the Dignitary who told me of the relations between the Church and the Government. The Church had its own governing organ, the Holy Synod, which sat by itself without Government interference. A representative of the Government could be present but had no right to dominate the proceedings. In Tsarist times the Bishops and Metropolitans could do nothing by themselves. Their gathering had to be presided over by the Procurator of the Holy Synod and he was a layman appointed by the Emperor, and completely subservient to his will. Nowadays it is presided over by the Patriarch and the position is as it used to be in the old days before Peter the Great turned the Church into an instrument of Government. In those early days both the Church and the Tsar were the two pillars of the State, the spiritual and the temporal, both equal, separate but complementary. Today, there is only one pillar of the State, the temporal power, but there are other props, of which the Church is one. The Church has self-government now in most things, but on such matters as the restoration of church buildings, or permission to open training colleges, the Soviet Government has a special department called the " People's Commissariat for Religion ". This is sometimes irreverently called the " People's Commissariat for God " and is said to consist of one Commissar and two typists. The Dignitary with whom I had an interview told me that the Government had helped them a lot. They had

restored a number of churches at State expense and had then handed them back to the Church. I was later able to confirm this statement by what I saw. For instance, the Uspensky Cathedral at Zagorsk and the Cathedral of St. Vladimir at Kiev had been restored and handed back. The ecclesiastical authorities have to find the money to run the churches and keep them in repair. They are not allowed to possess large properties as they used to and have to rely on the contributions of the faithful. He told me they had three priests' training colleges and were satisfied with that. Later I heard from other quarters that they really wanted more but had not as yet received permission.[1] Nevertheless, it seemed that in return for what the State does for the Church the latter uses its spiritual influence in support of the Government and of all patriotic movements at home, and also backs up Soviet diplomacy by using its influence in a pro-Russian sense among the Greek and Levantine Orthodox congregations of the Near and Middle East. In fact, the interest which the Russian Church is now taking in its sister Orthodox Churches in Asia Minor, Greece, the Balkans and Syria has clearly a political motive and is encouraged by the Soviet authorities. It is on all fours with the policy of the Government of Atheists and Agnostics of the French Third Republic who used to support the Roman Catholic Church for reasons of high policy in Syria and the Lebanon. The Orthodox Church also used to be a political weapon in Poland but I could not gather that it was being used in that role at the moment, for the atmosphere is not favourable. All the same, I had the impression that the Dignitary I visited was well aware of all this and was quite satisfied with the position. He had a twinkle in his eye which spoke volumes.

I had heard so much about the " Society of the Godless " which used to run anti-religious propaganda in the days of ultra-militant Communism, that I made some enquiries to find out if it was still in existence and if so what it was doing. I found that it had an office, but whenever I rang it up nobody seemed to be in. In fact, I was unable to contact any responsible person connected with this once influential society. Still there was no doubt that

[1] This has now been granted.

it was still in existence, though any activities would at the moment be frowned upon by the Kremlin.

The Orthodox Church is only one of the religions in Russia today. There is a new one—Communism. And the State, though tolerating and even assisting the older one, in fact favours the new one. The situation is thus not quite the same as in Russia before Peter the Great's reforms, for then there was no handicap to the official church; whereas today it is doubtful if any army officer would stand much chance of promotion if he were seen attending Mass, and the same thing would probably apply to the prospects of a civil servant. But Stalin is reported to have said, soon after his rise to power, that if the old religion did not die out naturally within ten years of the October Revolution the Soviet regime would have to recognise it. It has clearly not died out. Its congregations are smaller than they used to be but they are more sincere in their adherence to the church, and the general position is healthier. I reckon that from a quarter to a third of the population of Russia attend churches regularly. Some observers whom I met in Moscow thought that the figure was one half but I think that is too high. In any case, the proportion is not any smaller than in England. And I came across some surprising instances of persons in Government offices who attend church. One young civil servant told me that he had lost so many relatives in the war and suffered so much that he found consolation in the Church.

If a quarter or a third of the population acknowledge the spiritual leadership of the old faith, probably an equal number acknowledge and actually practise the new Marxist-Communist faith. They consist of people in the Government, both national and local, the higher ranks of the Civil Service, and then a certain number of people in all walks of life. The rest are not directly attached to either religion. But since the temporal powers favour the new faith, they probably veer slightly towards it, while they may retain their respect for the old.

But even if the new faith is only actively practised by a minority, the whole population takes part in the great State ceremonies and does reverence to the temporal leaders of the State. There is a definite religious fervour about the Russian veneration of their

State institutions and of their political chiefs. The demonstrations before the mausoleum of Lenin on the Anniversary of the October Revolution are like a great religious ceremony. Red flags and slogans inscribed on banners are the modern substitute for icons and scriptural texts. The pilgrimage to see the body of Lenin has deep spiritual significance, which I, for one, felt when I went to see him, having seen him often in the flesh. The Russian people are fundamentally religious but their religion may be a secular one and salvation may be for this earth only.

I attended one very important sitting of the Moscow Soviet in the great hall of the Kremlin on the eve of the Anniversary of the October Revolution. Whenever the name of Lenin or Stalin was mentioned the whole vast audience solemnly rose and clapped, for not less than two or three minutes. It was like an act of devotion, almost like crossing oneself before the altar. On occasions when I talked with Russians and happened to tell them that I had been in Leningrad, had witnessed the October Revolution and had seen and spoken to Lenin, I found that at once a hush came over the company and I was immediately regarded as a person who had been highly privileged to have had such an experience. Most of the people I met in Russia this time were children when the October Revolution came and to hear me talk like that was for them almost like an early Christian meeting with someone who had witnessed important events at the foundation of Christianity.

I was also very much struck by the atmosphere of genuine devotion which the Russians display in the arrangement of some of their museums. For instance, I went one day to the Lenin Museum in Moscow. Here I joined up with a party of children led by a young woman who told them in simple language the story of the life of Lenin; how the idea came to him as a youth, after his brother had been hanged by the Tsar's executioners, to struggle for the liberation of the people of Russia; that not only Russian workers and peasants needed liberation but the toiling masses of the world as well; how he suffered in prison and exile; worked underground and abroad; and at last returned in triumph to lead his people to salvation. I could see that a perfect catechism of

belief had grown up round the person of Lenin. Some of these children seemed to know it by heart. I saw one precocious youngster, who had clearly learnt it all before, pull the mistress up on a small point of detail. She smiled and agreed with the child.

We came to a room draped with deep crimson and purple flags, a half-light glowing round the death mask of Lenin. We all stood in silence and then passed on to another room where a great globe of the world stood. Round the walls were all the books that Lenin had written in his lifetime. The globe was studded with little red dots, the places in the world where Lenin's works were published and read. The globe and the bookshelves were meant to convey a lesson to those children. Here was a man who had a great faith in the liberation of Man from exploitation. He suffered and triumphed and he had given a message to the world.

In addition to the religious atmosphere there is also a strong sense of historical evolution in the arrangement of all the Russian museums and exhibitions. If the Lenin Museum conveys the religious atmosphere, the historical museum in Moscow nearby conveys a scientific one, propounding the Marxian thesis that society evolves according to the instruments by which science enables man to conquer his surroundings. This is also shown in the art museums. For instance, the Tretyakov Gallery, which was always a wonderful place in Tsarist days, was even better now, for the pictures are arranged in historical order, so that one could see the way in which art has reflected the growth of Russian society throughout the centuries. I found the same in the museums of some of the monasteries, such as those at the " Smolensk " and " Novodivichy ". One of these had an excellent exhibition of Russian ecclesiastical architecture showing its developments from early times.

There are also other museums which venerate great Russian personalities of the past. For instance, the Tolstoy Museum is dedicated to the life of that great man. And there is the little Dostoevski Museum in the rooms of the hospital for the poor in Moscow where the author's father served as a doctor and where he was born and lived his childhood. It was with a peculiar thrill

that I sat in the chair where he wrote his famous books and held the very pen he used. It is significant that in both these museums there are displayed on the walls complimentary speeches from Soviet leaders honouring the memory of these great Russians.

Thus the new faith of Russia has an objective side which is based on historical determinism and science. Its subjective side is based on hero-worship and veneration of an idea that Russia is the country that can show the world the way to salvation. If the former can be seem in these museums, the latter can be seen in the great State functions. I was fortunate to be in Moscow on the Anniversary of the October Revolution in 1945 and was given an opportunity to watch the ceremony. It was in the Red Square on November 7th. The morning was overcast and light snow fell from time to time. I was dressed with all the thickest clothes I had got and only just managed to keep warm. The members of the Government led by Molotov stood on the roof of the Lenin mausoleum and took the salute. In front of them were the three regiments of the Moscow garrison with massed bands. Trumpets heralded a speech by the commander of the garrison and the great parade began. Massed bands played the National Anthem and the guns of the Kremlin fired salvoes. For an hour and a half the armed strength of Russia marched past the mortal remains of the Great Man. Then for several more hours the workers of the Moscow factories filed by carrying banners with portraits of the leaders of Russia and the mottos of the Revolution. Faith was proclaimed in the liberation of mankind, the new orthodox belief in the form of a testament. The faces of the vast crowd showed traces of past strain and suffering. But they were faces that were happy at a great deliverance, faces with boundless hope and belief in the future of Russia. Above all, it was a Russian crowd, and, so, in the intervals of waiting for a traffic jam to dissolve, it sang and danced and many a Russian folk song sounded on the cold November air.

I looked across the Red Square. There under the shadow of St. Basil's was the statue of Citizen Minin and Prince Pozharsky. They must have witnessed a similar kind of scene when in 1618 they marched into Moscow after the expulsion of the Poles.

It is this sort of scene which makes me feel that these people change little through the centuries. Russia is a great family with a message that she wants to give to the world. The world may not want to hear her but she wants to give it. And there is no question of forcing a system on a reluctant world as the Nazis tried to do. The basic Russian idea is that they are the community chosen to inspire and lead the way. I think that it is centuries of suffering in the past which makes Russia feel as a family. A clear-sighted Frenchman once said, "The Russian mind is a combination of mysticism and conformity."[1]

Modern Russia, in fact, has arisen out of a combination of many ingredients of the Russian character. The revolutionary movements of the nineteenth century were the basis of modern Russia, but these were built out of elements in the Russian character of former centuries, changed to suit modern times. Modern Russia's revolutionary movements first took shape on a national scale in the sixties of last century. The first big movement was Nihilism, which had its roots in the past. These roots were found to extend, curiously enough, right into the soil of the Orthodox Church. Both were ascetic, tending to withdraw from the world and looking for an apocalyptic coming of Salvation. The Nihilist wanted to destroy the material world around him in order that a new one should arise on its ashes. Where he differed from the Orthodox Church was that he wanted the materialist apocalypse to usher in Salvation on this earth and not in the next. Moreover, he denied the existence of God, or, if he existed, said he was Evil. He rejected all moral obligations towards his fellow men if they conflicted at all with the attainment of the main idea.

Marxism and Communism took up the thread where Nihilism dropped it. They contained much in common with Nihilism. There was the anarchistic tendency to foster revolt against the capitalist economic system. But Marxism toned this down and concentrated more on construction than destruction. But there is just the same totalitarian tendency, as in Nihilism, to replace individual citizen rights and, in the dictatorship of the proletariat,

[1] Comte de Custrin. *Russie en Trente Neuf.*

to build up a powerful central executive and a police state. All this is in exact keeping with what has gone before in Russian history. There is no moral law where a class interest comes in. Class interest, in fact, supersedes it, as Dostoevski said it would. It is permissible to do anything against a capitalist. There are only two camps—class enemy and class comrade. This, of course, accounts for the intense bitterness and subjective hatred which lies beneath much Communist propaganda.

Messianism, too, is there in Communism. It is a doctrine of the Salvation of Man from exploitation. But it is much more clear-sighted and constructive than was Nihilism. The proletariat has a messianic mission to deliver mankind from wage slavery. The perennial Russian urge to attain perfection completely and at once will be realised in the World Revolution and the materialist apocalypse of the modern world is the equivalent of the Last Judgement Day of the Orthodox Church.

The Russian revolutionaries took the Marxist theory of economic determinism from Germany. But being much more human and imaginative than the German originators of this theory, they proceeded at once to warm it up by adding to it the religious doctrine of Salvation. The proletariat will deliver Mankind by its self sacrifice. Here is no automatic evolution based on a scientific theory. This is one more example of the Russian habit, which has gone on for centuries, of taking ideas from Western Europe and working them up in their own Russian way. The Russian Communists pretend to be materialist; they are, in fact, deeply religious, though their religion is a secular one applicable only to life on this earth. Russian Communism, in fact, is the Eastern Orthodox Church in a materialist robe officiating before the altar of a proletarian Redeemer.[1]

[1] Nicolas Berdyaev in his penetrating work *The Origins of Russian Communism* (Bles, 1937), has given in my opinion the best analysis of this aspect of the Russian mind.

CHAPTER VII

LENINGRAD REVISITED

IN A COUNTRY that is busy catching up with centuries of backwardness, it is natural that the trains are somewhat leisurely. Yet the *Golden Arrow*, the crack express in which I travelled to Leningrad, although only five months after the end of the war, was running as in 1939, well appointed, comfortable and punctual. I saw signs of the recent war, for the Germans had broken across this railway and had cut off Leningrad from the south. They had even cut the Vologda railway to the east. I saw parts of railway stations still in ruins, rusty German tanks still lying by the railway side and some areas of forest which had been blasted by shell-fire. We drew into Leningrad and entered the old " Nicolas " railway station, now more appropriately named after the October Revolution. I was travelling with Mr. Tataev of the *Daily Express*. We were met by a Russian lady from " Intourist " who had a car ready to take us to an hotel. I noted that the statue of the Emperor Alexander III on the rough Cossack pony outside the station had gone. I heard that the authorities had kept it there for a long time recognising its artistic value, in spite of the tyrannical character which it represented. But apparently it eventually had to go to make more room for the traffic.

I was in Leningrad again after twenty-seven years. I had left for Vologda in March 1918 after the Brest-Litovsk Treaty was signed and the Soviet Government had moved to Moscow. I had gone to Vologda because I had been starving in Leningrad and needed to get some food and recuperate. Passing down the Nefsky Prospect I could see many old landmarks. There was the " Gostiny Dvor ", the great building where some of the best shops used to be. It was burnt to a shell by German incendiaries.

There was the old municipal building which had been damaged by shell-fire but was now as good as new. There was the Kazan Cathedral, built as a copy of St. Peter's in Rome; to such an extent had Western influences crept into this city that even the Orthodox Church of the East here had to assume the garb of the West. There was the Admiralty spire and the great Cathedral of St. Isaacs, once a " Godless Museum " but now closed in deference to the new policy towards the Church.

After being settled in the Astoria Hotel, I was taken out to see the sights that I once knew so well. Considering what it has been through, Leningrad is still amazingly like the old city that cradled the October Revolution twenty-eight years ago. Within the last twelve months its centre has been so restored one would hardly know that it had been in the line of battle. The Winter Palace looked well in its new coat of green and white paint which was, I was told, the original colour and much better than the dirty red paint as I knew it. We passed the old Russian Foreign Office where I had twice interviewed Nicolas II's Foreign Minister, Mr. Sasonov, and later, in those grim days of the early October Revolution, where Trotsky's secretary had given me a Russian copy of the secret Treaties between Imperial Russia and the Western Allies over the Straits, the Balkans and the Danubian countries. We passed the Vassily Ostrov, the Bourse and the University, then the Naval Cadet College where I attended the first conference of the All-Russian Soviets and saw Kerensky and Lenin face each other in open debate. Then on to the Fortress of Peter and Paul where, in 1908, I had ventured to enter and look at its forbidding bastions. Later I had gone there to interview the Tsarist Generals and some of Kerensky's Ministers who had been shut up there by the Bolsheviks. We went inside the church built by Peter the Great and saw his tomb and those of his relatives and of all the Tsars down to Alexander III. Everything was being kept in perfect order. Even the two-headed eagle at the entrance gate dating back to 1703 looked well, surrounded by statues of Venus and Mars. We went on to see the log hut where Peter the Great lived when he was building the city. Then on to the Smolny Institute where I had witnessed the events in those

" ten days that shook the world ". Now that John Reed is dead, Arthur Ransome and I are the only living Englishmen who witnessed them. We looked at the Smolny from the outside only, as it is now the centre of administration and the seat of the Leningrad Soviet. I thought it was a pity that the authorities did not seem to recognise the immense interest the place would have for tourists.

Up till now I had been taken round by intourist guides, but after lunch I went out entirely on my own and, as in Moscow and elsewhere in Russia, I found myself perfectly free to go where I liked. I wandered past the Winter Palace to the Hermitage and the bridge where Lisa threw herself into the water in Pushkin's opera, *The Queen of Spades*. I passed the field of Mars where the fallen fighters for the Revolution were buried in honour. The monument had suffered in the bombardment but still stood erect and massive. Inscriptions on the granite stones proclaimed the story of those who died, not only for Russia, but for Humanity, in order to save Man from exploitation by Man. One sees there the constant strain in Russian thought; the idea that Russians are sacrificing themselves not for Russians only but in order to carry a message to all mankind.

I passed on to the church built over the spot where Alexander II was assassinated. It looked gloomy and neglected but I was told that repairs were going on inside. Then I turned towards the " Krasny Zamok ", where the mad Emperor Paul had lived and was assassinated. Outside was the parade ground where he had held his parades and terrified his officers and men. Later this place became the Cadet Military Academy and it was here where heavy fighting took place during the October Revolution between the Cadets and the Red Sailors of the Baltic Fleet from Kronstadt. I remember that fight only too well, for I lived on the " Fontanka " close by, and it was far too near to be pleasant. I went on to find the place where I lived. I found the block of flats, Fontanka 18, but I could not be sure of the room. At the door of the house I had often spent whole nights doing watchman's duty when soldiers of the dissolving Tsarist Army were having drunken orgies. They used to break into wine cellars and fired shots into the air all night long.

Leningrad is once more a model city in the making, the pride of the Soviet Union. And Leningraders are very proud people. They feel themselves the élite of Russia, the hard kernel of the Muscovite core that has held the nation together in " troublous times ". It was the only city in the old Russia that had a skilled industrial working class which for generations had lost contact with the land. The workers of Moscow had always one foot in the villages, but not those of Leningrad, who consequently always led the country in crisis. It made two Revolutions in one year: it resisted Yudenitch's White Army and finally has withstood two and a half years terrible battering by the German Army.

Together with Mr. Fomin, one of the architects of the Leningrad Planning Authority, I went out in a car one day along the Moscow road towards the Pulkovo hills. A little way out of Leningrad we passed a fine building called the " Dom Soyus ". This is to be the centre of the new city. It is proposed to let the population of Leningrad get back to what it formerly was, namely three and a half millions, but to spread the population out over double the former space. The old city centre at the Admiralty buildings will remain, but a second and a new town is to be built round the " Dom Soyus ", the new local Government building now lying in open fields outside the city. This impressive modern building had been slightly damaged by gun-fire during the fighting. Not far away, also in open country, there were some large blocks of workers flats which had not been completed when the war came. It was hoped to restart work on them soon. The general idea is that Leningrad shall remain a city where highly skilled engineering work is done and it will also continue to be the main northern port for overseas trade. All other types of industry have been removed from Leningrad and no fresh ones will be allowed in. For there is complete industrial planning in Leningrad, as throughout Russia.

We passed miles of derelict land, scarred here and there by trenches and machine-gun points. These had been the advanced Russian positions. Everything was running wild. Houses had disappeared or only a few foundations were left. Here and there the old milestones stood out gaunt and bare amid the scenes of

desolation. These date back to the reign of Catherine the Great, for this was the highway along which the nobility passed between their town houses and their country mansions in the Pulkovo hills. We arrived at these low hills where the Germans had their advanced positions. Soon we approached Pushkin, a country resort which I had often visited before. The Tsar had two summer palaces there, in one of which Nicholas II was interned in the summer of 1917, following the February Revolution. The largest palace was built by Catherine the Great. It had been terribly damaged by the Germans who had stolen everything they could lay their hands on, had torn up the parquet floors, had ripped out the beautiful panelling and smashed the famous Hall of Mirrors. They had burnt down part of it but fortunately not all, and my architect companion said that it was hoped to restore at least some of it. The other palace, which had been built by Alexander I, was not so badly damaged and had the roof on. But all over the walls there were slogans painted and scratched in German and Spanish: " Long Live Franco; Heil Hitler." The Russians are going to let these inscriptions stay as a proof that the Spanish Blue Division did actually invade Russia.

Leningrad prides itself on having a different type of theatre and opera to Moscow. Friendly rivalry between the two great cities continues. Thus, I saw the Pushkin-Tschaikovsky opera *Eugen Onegin* played in both places and noted the difference. The Moscow presentation was spectacular and had more action. The Leningrad presentation was simpler and in some ways more profound. This also applied to the ballet, *The Swan Lake*, which I saw in both places. Leningrad claims the right to its own interpretations and wants the world to know they are different from those of Moscow. Of course, Moscow being the capital has the greater pull on the best technical equipment. It used to be the other way round in the old days when Leningrad was the capital. Now Leningrad has to maintain its reputation by thinking out new ideas, as Moscow once had to.

In general, I felt that the official, rather stiff atmosphere that I once experienced in Leningrad has now been transferred to Moscow. Moscow used to be the easier place to meet people, and

they talked more freely there in the old days. Today this is reversed. In Leningrad now people are less official and much more ready to talk. I think a false impression may have been gained by travellers who did not know this.

While I was in Leningrad I made a tour of the bookshops. Leningrad is the only place in Russia at present where books are relatively cheap. And thereby hangs a tragic tale, for the reason is that so many people died of starvation in the siege that their libraries have been on the market ever since. Eight hundred thousand people died in this way during the siege. This also shows what a mine of literary wealth there must have been in Leningrad, which even the October Revolution and the Civil War had not dispersed. It required the German siege to reduce this heroic city to its bare bones.

Naturally, one of the places they want you to visit in Leningrad is the museum of the siege. Here you see evidence of the hardship and torture through which the inhabitants passed when the Germans surrounded it except for a narrow lane across the ice of Lake Ladoga. And even here German shells threatened to close the lane except at night. When food supplies were almost out the authorities had to decide to reduce the starvation rations still further in order to enable the men in the trenches to go on fighting. That decision cost the lives of about two hundred thousand people and the authorities knew it. One wonders why the Germans failed to take Leningrad and one can only guess that it was fear of the unknown, of the mysterious force which kept the Leningraders fighting although all material calculations were against them; perhaps the Germans knew that if they were to conquer the spirit of the people they would have to raze the city to the ground. And then they would be left with no shelter in the Russian Arctic winter.

Late one evening, before I left Leningrad, I went out to see the sunset in a big public park on one of the islands of the Neva. It was blowing a cold wind, but the sunset made up for it. I looked out across the waters of the Gulf of Finland and saw in the far distance the faint outline of the Cathedral of Kronstadt, the island fortress founded by Peter the Great to guard the approaches to

St. Petersburg and in later days the bastion of the October Revolution. Further on I could see the rise in the hills on the south shore near Peterhof, a lovely spot now cruelly ruined by war. But one felt that deliverance at last had come to Russia—one hopes for good.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ORGANISATION OF SOVIET INDUSTRY; A VISIT TO THE KIROV WORKS

WHAT IS it like to work in a big factory in Soviet Russia? I was able to get an idea of this one day while I was in Leningrad, for I was taken to visit the Kirov, formerly the Putilov, works. This was one of the places from which the flames of revolt against the Tsar's Empire first came and which was one of the firmest upholders of the Soviet regime. I had visited it once during the hectic days of the October Revolution. Now I saw it after it had gone through the worst trial of all—a two-and-a-half years' siege. Over ten thousand shells had been dropped on the factory, for the Germans knew its value for the defence of Leningrad. The factory was situated right in the firing line with the German trenches only a mile or so away. I was first taken to the administrative buildings and met three directors, an army engineer, and two civil engineers, in the Board Room. They admitted their difficulties in raising production after the terrible time the works had been through. On the other hand, they had found during the war, in spite of the siege conditions they were living in, new processes of production which should be useful now in peacetime. More than half the factory had been evacuated to the Urals, and of the thirty thousand workers that were once there only ten thousand remained, but more were coming back as the Army demobilised. I found that about half the people working there were women, but these would be returning to their homes as the men came back. They did not expect that they would have more women in the factory than they had before the war and, in fact, they were going to encourage women to go back to domestic life. They said they were gradually getting the factory back to working order. Five thousand of their men and women had been killed in the fighting and,

looking out of the window, I could see the machine-gun points and artillery positions alongside the workshops. On the roof of one of the shops there was also an observation point which had been heavily shelled.

I was taken to lunch with the directors and senior members of the staff. It was a plain wholesome meal and similar to that which I found later being served in the works' canteen to the men. During lunch we discussed a number of subjects of a semi-political nature. The Belsen trial was going on in the British Zone in Germany. They expressed the opinion that we were much too soft with war criminals and that we ought to finish quickly with them and shoot them out of hand. I had seen articles in the Soviet Press a few days before expressing similar views, so apparently these engineers and directors were only expressing what they had read. In the absence of any other views being expressed in any other papers than those of the Government or the Communist Party, it is possible to see how opinion in Russia is very easily welded into a common form. And the idea is general in Russia that mass justice is the only way to deal with Fascists. This also involves complete freedom of comment while a case is still *sub judice*. It was possible to see at a glance what a gulf there is between the Russian and British idea of judicial procedure. My mind went back to the five hundred Tsarist officers who, in the autumn of 1918, were arrested and shot without trial simply on the grounds that many of them were (and they undoubtedly were) plotting against the Soviet regime. Unless one understands this idea of mass justice, it is impossible even to begin to get behind the Russian mentality. For them it is not the individual that counts but the class or the society.

After lunch I was taken round the shops. There was obviously no attempt to hide anything from me; I was even asked where I would like to go. We first went to a big foundry. All one side of it had been smashed by artillery fire and had been rebuilt. It was now full of huge crates containing parts of smelting furnaces, steam hammers and rolling mills all lying about in picturesque confusion along with a lot of junk from recent building operations. It was a thoroughly Russian scene but somehow the work was

getting along. Gangs of men and women were at work, usually two of them working with two looking on. Then the other two would take a hand at work and the first two would rest. No doubt the severe privation which they had been going through was partly responsible for this. A gang of German prisoners was at work on repairs to a wall. They were being guarded by a short, thick-set, tough Russian woman with a rifle and two children, apparently her children—again a very Russian scene. The Germans looked quite well and were getting Russian army rations. The crates of machinery had just come back from the Urals and steps were being taken to restart the foundry. We went to another shop which was working. Here they were turning out electric tram parts and other municipal transport requirements which were badly wanted. In fact this was mainly what the works were doing, although in one shop they were beginning to start on turbine work which is their chief line.

In each shop there were notice boards giving the names of those workers who had exceeded the quota for the shop. This was fixed by the management in agreement with the Trade Unions. The amount by which the quota had been exceeded was given; also the total week's production and its relation to the quota. There were also figures to show how much fuel and electricity had or had not been saved. Everything was done to stimulate the interest of the workers in the work of their own factory. At the same time I had the impression that in a British or American factory the output per man would be greater. Although I got no production figures per man shift, I could see that at every bench, drill or lathe there were four or five people standing where in the West one would see one man and a mate. The management clearly had to deal with a people who normally tend to take things in a leisurely way and this, too, was in a factory containing the élite of Russia's workers.

The average rate of pay is eight hundred roubles a month. But if a worker exceeds the quota, as is frequently the case, he gets more, anything up to one thousand six hundred roubles a month. This does not mean much because it all depends on what scale of rationing he is on. A man working in a foundry which involves

hard physical work gets a higher food ration than someone who is on a bench involving less strenuous work. Thus, a man working in a furnace gets eight hundred grammes of bread a day, against one working on a lathe who gets six hundred grammes. There is an eight-hour day and occasionally two hours overtime may be worked, but never more. Before the war there was a six-hour day but that has been dropped in view of the urgent need of production. They work all through Saturday and have Sunday off. Women get equal pay for equal work. The Trade Unions do not elect members to the Board of Management. These are nominated by the State Trust and appointed by the Commissar of Trade and Industry. But the Trade Unions have a right to be consulted on all matters concerning the management of the factory. The real Trade Union work, however, is in negotiation of wages and conditions and looking after the welfare of the workers. Moreover, I was satisfied that Trade Unions are not just under Government control. I had evidence that the rank-and-file workers do use pressure on their Union officials to get grievances redressed and that no influence in matters of this kind is used by the authorities. I heard of a case where a Union official put by the Union Executive was turned down because he did not satisfy the workers. Trade Unions in Russia are undoubtedly influential, but it must always be remembered that even in matters of wages and conditions the last word rests with the Government, whose decision is final.

The Trade Unions have to administer considerable funds derived both from State sources and from membership contributions. These cover sickness, accident and unemployment benefit. Things which in Britain are administered from departments in Whitehall are in Russia done through the Unions on behalf of the State. Some workers are not members of Unions, but they are only a small minority. They have to depend on the benefits of the State Insurance Schemes and I gathered that these were not so favourable. The Unions have their Bureau and Secretary at each factory; they are also owners of considerable properties and have holiday hostels in the Crimea and the Caucasus where, before the war, the workers could go for a month's holiday with pay. Needless to say, for the moment, it is all a

memory, owing to the need for a big production drive and the difficulties of transport. The Soviet authorities are under no illusion about the effect on production of shorter hours and long holidays, unless there is a very much higher standard of industrial efficiency which under present conditions is going to be very difficult to introduce, at least for some time ahead. Finally, the Trade Unions own allotments which they let to their members and also own market gardens and farms, the produce of which they sell to their members at specially favourable prices. It certainly pays to be a member of a Union.

In order to get some idea of the role which the State industries play in the national finances of the Union, I studied the Budget statement for 1944 and found that nearly half the revenue of the State came from nationalised industries and from a turnover tax collected through State-selling agencies. Each industry, group of factories, coal field, or oil-producing area, is controlled by a State Trust which has to stand on its own legs financially, has its own budget and is responsible for policy to the Commissariat of Trade and Industry, which appoints the directors. The Commissar of Finance also supervises the finance of each Trust and has the right to make recommendations or give directions for dealing with deficits, if any. Surpluses can be invested in the industry, but the State takes a proportion, which may take the form of a direct tax on the profits, or a turnover tax collected through the Trust-selling agency. In this way the State is able to regulate prices, encourage the consumption of one class of goods or discourage another, according to the general plan laid down for the national economy in any particular year. There is no doubt that the Soviet Union's industrial planning system and general economy is very impressive and would, if the complications of external wars and internal " purges " did not supervene, produce very important results. Even as it is, it has without doubt enabled Russia to become an industrial country and to balance industry with agriculture as has never been done before in her history. The various industrial Five Year Plans of the Union have enabled Russia to have a modern war industry which has successfully withstood its recent trials. As a result, too, the centre of industrial

gravity has been shifted east towards the Urals, thereby avoiding the concentration of industry in the west, which has strategic disadvantages. The next problem is to put into effect the Five Year Plan laid down in the spring of 1946 and this is going to be perhaps the most difficult task of all because it involves repairing the damage of the most destructive war in Russian history.

CHAPTER IX

THE ROAD TO THE UKRAINE

AFTER my visit to Leningrad, I asked permission to visit the Ukraine. This was granted and all arrangements made. A berth was booked for me on the midnight train to Kiev, the only one that was running at the time. Travelling in Western Russia along the track of the great armies was not easy even in the autumn of 1945, two years after the retreat of the Germans. The Soviet authorities had regarded as priority number one the re-establishment of the railways and had quickly got them going again. But from a point about fifty miles out of Moscow till I reached Kiev I did not see a railway station or a locomotive shed that was not in ruins, nor did I pass a town that was not wholly or in part a heap of rubble and cinders. At every station there was a hut which did duty for a booking office, waiting-room, luggage depot and stationmaster's bureau. The bells that announced the arrival and departure of trains, such a feature of pre-war Russia, sounded no more, for they had gone the way of the stations. All the river bridges were temporary wooden ones, over which the trains had to crawl; yet the train I travelled in ran to time, although slowly.

It was bitterly cold on the starry night I left Moscow in fifteen degrees of frost. The sleeping car I was in was not heated; something was wrong with the heating apparatus at one end and, anyway, there was no fuel. So I put on all the warm things I had and managed to sleep. Next morning the train was crossing open farm land near Suchini in the Province of Kaluga. There were magnificent views for miles as the train ascended to the top of the great folds in the earth that rise and fall on the plains of Eastern Europe. On these rises one can see twenty or thirty miles on a clear day, and then one knows the meaning of the Russian word " Prostor ", that feeling of vast space which has

inspired many a Russian poet and composer from Pushkin to Tschaikovsky. At one place we stopped and, having no fuel on board to start a samovar going or light the one stove that worked, a group of us went foraging.

" Comrade Stationmaster, is there any fuel we can have?"

" No, my little doves, some soldiers were here yesterday and have cleared everything away."

Then we saw an engine with a tender full of coal in one of the sidings. The stationmaster looked the other way, and when it was clear the locomotive driver was not looking either, we filled a couple of buckets from the tender. We got some tea for breakfast and were warm that night.

At wayside stations cattle wander about, putting their noses into the waiting-rooms and crossing the rails quite unconcernedly. Peasants at wayside stations offered us cooked chickens for an equivalent of thirty shillings at the diplomatic rate of exchange, and poor chickens at that. But a wise traveller would supply himself with what he needed before he set out. In my case I got my Moscow hotel to give me enough food for two days. All I bought from wayside peasants was an occasional jug of scalded milk with cream on top, at quite a reasonable price. Soon I began to see signs of the recent military operations; trenches by the railway side, abandoned tanks, wrecked aeroplanes, burnt-out villages which had not yet been rebuilt. Some land was lying derelict. The inhabitants were perhaps dead or had died in exile in Germany. Other villages were in process of being rebuilt and some of the land was ploughed and planted. A few cows were strolling about, foraging for themselves and returning home at night. Early in the afternoon we reached Briansk, an important railway junction. A large part of the town had been virtually levelled when the Russians advanced in the summer of 1943. But quite a lot of temporary wooden houses had been put up. They seemed to be two-roomed houses which might serve as a nucleus round which a larger and more permanent one could be built. The train stayed some time, so I walked about in part of the town near the railway. There was a small market going on at which peasants were selling their produce at prices no cheaper

than Moscow. I saw many of them riding back to their villages on trains, standing on the footboards, on the couplings or lying on the roof and going forty or fifty miles in fifteen degrees of frost. For the Russians have amazing constitutions and one can see how they finally overwhelmed the Germans by dint of their physique, their numbers and their unconquerable spirit.

After Briansk we went through mile after mile of forest, still mainly conifer forest with some scattered oak. The soil was poor and sandy in this border region between the Ukraine and Muscovite Russia. In the great forest south of Briansk the Russian partisans used to hide between attacks on German trains and troops. It was a magnificent place for this sort of work. Here and there I could see signs of savage fighting; trees smashed at half length, shell craters and dug-outs. The Germans had cleared the forest for a hundred yards each side of the line to prevent the Russian partisans from taking cover near the railway. There were now signs of new and more peaceful occupation: tree-felling to provide timber for rebuilding towns and villages, large dumps of firewood with people guarding them. These forests are all State property but the Commissariat for Forests has granted timber cutting rights to the population of neighbouring areas for reconstruction purposes. Freight trains piled high with logs going south to the reconstruction areas were moving along the track the whole time, and shunted into sidings to let us pass. Some of these trains carried reparations timber from Finland. This forest contained the last remnants of the European bison, now said to be reduced to a herd of ten.

Towards nightfall we reached the borders of the Ukraine at " Michaelovsky Khutor ". Here the forest ended and we came out into open agricultural land. The villages here looked different; they were typical Ukrainian with their whitewashed walls and straw thatched roofs. There is a very definite physical line which can be drawn between Muscovite Russia and the Ukraine. North of the line the land is poorer for agriculture and there is much conifer forest. The people are tougher and rougher than south of the line. Here the land is richer, oak woods begin to appear, nature seems kinder and the climate warmer. The people

too, are soft and pleasant. I noticed it at once in the railway carriage. I talked quite a lot to my travelling companions. In my compartment was a general of the Red Army. Next door was a man from Leningrad who had lost both arms in the fighting. He wore two medals on his chest. We discussed the role of Leningrad in the October Revolution and once more I caused an awed silence when I informed him and the rest of the company that I had talked with Lenin. We all agreed that without Lenin the course of the Revolution would have been even more difficult than it was. Lenin was always a great realist and knew the best thing to do, although that was not always apparent to others. I found everyone most excited about the Russian football team then visiting England. For them it was a matter of the prestige of Russia in the West. I tried to assure them that we did not take it quite like that in England and that sport could be enjoyed without political implications! Everyone wanted to know what life was like in England. At that time Winston Churchill was their favourite British statesman. They were all far more suspicious of the Labour Government and Mr. Bevin than they were of the Coalition Government. I tried rather unsuccessfully to overcome their fears. There was, I noticed, a lot of good-natured banter and teasing between the Muscovites and the Ukrainians in the carriage—very like the kind of thing that goes on between Englishmen and Scotsmen. I made special friends with a Ukrainian who was a railway official at Kiev. He described to me the fighting in the Ukraine in which he had taken part. He said that everyone now spoke Ukrainian but all knew Russian as well, and that the Orthodox Church had a very great number of adherents in the Ukraine. I felt he was proud to feel himself an Ukrainian but he was still a very loyal Russian.

There was one aggressive little man who announced himself a journalist on a Moscow paper and was apparently a strong Communist Party man. He threw his weight about a lot and told everyone what his ideas were about Europe in general and the Balkans in particular, where he had been travelling on some semi-official mission. He then began to lay down the law about Britain. Our whole policy was designed to keep Russia weak.

Yet we were weak ourselves, our economy was tottering under capitalist mismanagement and the new Labour Government could not possibly be anything other than a stop-gap before there was open Fascism or a real Government of the Left. The assembled company appealed to me and I told them that apparently the gentleman knew so much about England that I hesitated to oppose so great an authority. There was a general titter all round, and thereafter most of the company gave him a Russian nickname which is best translated as " Mr. Know-all ". That name stuck to him till we got to Kiev.

But the talks I had with the other people in the carriage showed that they all had somewhat the same ideas, only they were much less dogmatic and had a genuine desire to inquire and understand. For instance, I found them under the impression that Russia had really won the war, because her strong Communist system had proved irresistible. Great Britain and the U.S.A. had helped, of course, but without Russia we could not have won. When I agreed but said it was equally true that they could not have won without us they disagreed. Russia was too vast to conquer, they said. There was, of course, some measure of truth in that, though it is also true that, if it had not been for the West a large part of Russia might have remained under Nazi domination for a decade or more. But they would not admit this.

Then they were convinced that we were hostile to them now that the war was over and were genuinely mystified why this should be so. They were convinced that co-operation among Western Powers, particularly between Great Britain, the United States and France, meant the creation of a hostile *bloc* against Russia. When I said we must co-operate economically in the West or Europe would go down in famine and decay, they said that economic co-operation led to political co-operation and in the past that had always meant hostility to Russia; it had always been so and would be so again. I was left standing against a blank wall of prejudice built up over several decades, based on premises that no doubt originally had a considerable degree of justification. But they wouldn't see that times have changed and the West has learnt a lot about Russia and her Revolution and is more ready to

understand. I pointed to the change that had come in England with the General Election and the Labour Government, but here again I met with complete doubt and scepticism. Did I really think, I was asked, that the Labour Government would be able to accomplish anything? Surely the capitalists of the City of London wouldn't let it do anything to challenge the rights of private enterprise. When I told them that our Parliament was the political instrument for expressing the popular will, a smile came over their faces. They genuinely did not believe that the popular will could be expressed by a political institution freely elected unless first of all economic power was in the hands of the State. The seat of power, in fact, was economic only. Those who held it ruled the State and would not relinquish their power voluntarily. In fact, their attitude to world problems was primitive, naïve and rather out-of-date as a result of the complete intellectual isolation of the country. They were thinking in terms of their Marxist doctrines, their new faith borrowed originally from the West but worked up into a religion by themselves. Their minds were closed, for it was a matter of faith. One might as well argue with a Roman Catholic about the doctrine of Transubstantiation. It was impossible for them to understand that we have rights and duties in deciding on the state of the nation and do, in fact, exercise them. With Russians it is not the individual citizen that counts but the mass of citizens assembled in a class or in the nation as a whole. Once that class has taken power, no matter by what method, its will is law. The conversation died down, we came to no conclusions and the train entered the great station of Kiev, the capital of the Soviet Ukraine.

CHAPTER X

THE NEW UKRAINE

THE LAST time I had seen the hills of Kiev was in 1915 when I was on my way behind General Brusilov's army in its march against Austria. Much has happened to Kiev and the Ukraine since those days. It has seen three major invasions and eighteen revolutions!

Looking across the flat plain of the Dnieper, you can see the line the Tartar hordes took when, in the thirteenth century, they came up from the south-east, destroying everything there was. The Russians retired to the forests of the north and left a vacuum in the fertile Ukraine which later became the joint Polish and Lithuanian kingdom, thus bringing the Ukraine under Western influences; but she never forgot her allegiance to Eastern Slavdom. Roman Catholicism never made any headway in the Ukraine, though Polish and Western influences can be seen in the baroque style of many churches and buildings. The Muscovite power in the north finally liberated the Ukraine and united it with its Eastern Slav brother. But Tsarist Russia in the days of its decline blocked all avenues of local endeavour and cultural growth.

It was in those days that I last saw the Ukraine, when Kiev was little more than the seat of a provincial governor. There was only one Ukrainian national paper and monthly at that. The Ukrainian national literature was not recognised. Everything was concentrated in St. Petersburg and no local initiative was allowed for fear that weak governors would allow progressive movements to get out of control. The Ukrainian language was not recognised as such, being called a dialect of Great Russian. Now I saw that the two provincial newspapers of Kiev were published in Ukrainian. Among the magnificent new Government buildings is the seat of the Council of Commissars, and the

Ukrainian Parliament building is on the main hill of Kiev. They are built of granite and stand out against the skyline in an imposing mass, though both were badly damaged in the war. The Soviet regime, by giving to all the small nationalities of the former Empire the right to manage their own local affairs, and by giving complete cultural freedom and even encouraging it, solved all the petty, irritant national jealousies which the Tsarist regime had allowed to develop. I saw a fine statue of the Ukrainian national poet, Shevchenko, in the square opposite the University, which also had suffered during the war. That statue was not there when I had visited Kiev before. No recognition was then given to the special local traditions of the Ukrainian section of the Russian people.

After the fall of the Tsarist regime the Ukraine in general, and Kiev in particular, had a chequered career. Every conceivable crackpot got to work in the Ukraine. A movement headed by intellectuals and some middle-class people tried to set up an independent Ukrainian State. Anarchist bands roamed the plains and robbed at will. The Germans at war set their eyes on the corn of the Ukraine, and the Poles under Pilsudski dreamed of an empire extending to the Black Sea once more. The Red Army and the new revolutionary power in Moscow were not yet consolidated. Anarchy reigned in the Ukraine for five years and Kiev changed hands eighteen times. The latest and worst trial of all has been the second German invasion in twenty-seven years. Once more the Russians had to retire to the forests of the north, as they did from the Tartar invasion. And the Germans, like Djenghiz Khan, left a terrible record in Kiev. In the autumn of 1941 they ran amok there and in four days murdered in cold blood one hundred and forty thousand of its inhabitants. A great memorial to them is being prepared to be erected on one of the hills of Kiev. You can understand the impatience of the Russians at any argument about not being harsh with Germany when you realise what they have been through.

With the return of the Red Army two years ago, the Ukraine was united to Muscovite Russia once more and this time far more firmly than ever. For all Ukrainians realise that unless the two

branches of the Eastern Slavs hang together they are liable to hang separately. The centre of Kiev today is a sorry sight but most of the area around it is intact and reconstruction is going on. Smaller areas of devastation are to be seen all over the city. There had been great building operations between the wars and Kiev had become a modern city capable of housing the Government of the Ukraine. I was shown big town-planning schemes by the Academy of Architects. It is proposed to let this city grow to have about one and a half million population. The new houses that are being designed for Kiev are partly conventional West European and partly Ukrainian and Russian in type. A great botanical garden on one of the southern hills was being prepared by German prisoners. Life in Kiev was slowly returning to normal and there was enough food when I was there, though it was no cheaper than in Moscow. There was plenty of food in the villages round about, but insufficient transport to bring it into the town.

Fortunately all except one of the ancient monuments are intact. The most important of all is the Cathedral of St. Sophia. It would have been one of the tragedies of all time if it had been destroyed because it is the oldest building in Russia and is a complete testimony to the cultural and religious connection between mediaeval Russia and Greek Christianity. The church was built in 1037 by Yaroslav the Wise to celebrate the victory over the Pechenegs about fifty years after Vladimir of Kiev had accepted Eastern Christianity. Greek masons and artists came from Byzantium to do the work and they made the church almost a complete imitation of St. Sophia in Constantinople. Originally the church was half open to the weather and without doors, but this was altered later, because the climate of Kiev was more severe than that of Constantinople. The roof originally had cupolas and domes just like St. Sophia in Constantinople but under the influence of the Italian Renaissance the cupolas went baroque. This style came in with the Poles when they ruled the Ukraine for nearly three centuries. Hence Ukrainian churches always differ in their style from the Muscovite churches of North Russia which are nearer to the original Byzantine. These architectural differences explain much in Russian history.

The most notable feature of St. Sophia in Kiev is the Madonna in blue and gold mosaic in the roof over the altar, surrounded by the original eleventh-century Greek inscriptions. Excellent restoration had been done by Soviet experts and the mosaic looked fresher than when I saw it last. The expression of the eyes is typical of Byzantine and Eastern Christian art. The Madonnas of the Western churches are beautiful women of *this* world. That was not good enough for the Greeks and she had to be of the *next* world. There is a look of almost madness in the Kiev Madonna, an impression that she had come from another world. One sees the same thing in Russian icons and roof paintings. I have little doubt that the old Russian tradition that a mad person is someone to be reverenced because he is nearer to God came originally from this Greek idea depicted so well in their Madonnas. The impression I got of my visit to St. Sophia was that, after the German invasion, the world is lucky to have it still intact. The Soviet authorities have regarded it as an ancient monument and their experts have done great work in uncovering a number of eleventh-century wall paintings hitherto unknown.

I next went out to St. Cyril's church on the outskirts of Kiev. This is of no great antiquity but it is remarkable for wall paintings of the Russian painter, Vrubel, who lived in the last century. One of these paintings depicts the coming of the Holy Spirit and here again there is the same madness in the face of the Apostles. Each one of them has a different expression, but all display an absent-minded unearthliness. It is believed that Vrubel worked at St. Sophia and did some modern wall paintings there and possibly got his idea from the Madonna over the altar. Later he himself went mad.

I went next to the Pechirsky Lavra, the most famous shrine in all Russia. This great monastery used to be fabulously wealthy. For centuries it attracted pilgrims and amassed vast fortunes. It owned large tracts of territory and thousands of serfs. Needless to say, the Revolution swept all that away and the monastery was brought down to its original humble dimensions. I found that a large number of the buildings had been requisitioned for secular purposes but the monks had been left in possession of the

famous caves and the sacred relics. They were much reduced in numbers, but in the old days the inflated wealth of the monastery supported a vast number of monks in virtual idleness. Now about fifty of them look after the place and take five roubles a time from visitors. The Soviet regime is treating them with courtesy and consideration, but allows no accumulation of wealth as formerly went on. In fact, the monastery is returning to the traditions of mediaeval Russia. I went inside and was escorted round the underground galleries by a monk who explained to me who were the various saints and hermits who had lived in these caves, had died and been buried there. You could still see the actual bodies in some cases. I fear I rather offended the monk by asking him if the hermits ever did any work, such as illuminating manuscripts or copying sacred books.

He spat on the floor and said, " No, the people of the True Glory (Pravoslavny) only meditate and pray."

Scattered about along this famous hill of Kiev are numerous churches dating from the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. The view of these churches on the hill silhouetted against the sky, with the Dnieper threading its way across the great plain in the background, is one of the sights of Eastern Europe. At the summit of the hill is the famous Uspenky Cathedral, now one vast heap of ruins. It was nearly as old as St. Sophia, but was altered later on. It is now a terrible sight—as if the Tartars had been there again—this time the Tartars from the West. The Germans when they saw their days in Kiev were numbered apparently quite deliberately blew this fine old church up with dynamite. I stood and watched a gang of German prisoners with, as it were poetic justice, clearing away the rubble. The Russian lady who was showing me round said to me caustically, " A good thing they are made to clear it up, but it would have been better if it had never happened."

I noticed one important change in Kiev. It concerned the Jewish population which always was, and still is, large. Formerly they were all engaged in business, small trades and general dealing. They were not very popular, and whenever the Tsarist regime wanted to divert attention from its mismanagement and corruption

it incited anti-Semitic riots. Today the Soviet regime has nationalised all the stores and larger businesses and shops where Jews used to work, and which they largely owned. What then has become of these Jews? I found them in large numbers working in Government offices as junior civil servants, as clerks in municipally-owned businesses or State factories. In fact, they seemed to be the backbone of many of these institutions. But I don't think this was making them any more popular. I kept on hearing undercurrents of talk that " these Jews are here again ". This kind of thing, as usual in all cities, was only among the less intelligent section of the population and the authorities are very strict in suppressing any open manifestations of anti-Semitism. But it does not seem that the transference of the Jews from private trade and commerce to State industry and the civil service has altogether eliminated a latent anti-Jewish feeling. If arrangements could be made for some of the urban Jews of the Ukraine to settle on the land, the feeling, which is certainly less than it was, might disappear altogether.

As in other parts of Russia, I found that the street bazaars and fairs on the outskirts were very popular and most picturesque. The markets were only fairly well supplied with food, and small articles of commerce, such as household utensils, except for secondhand goods, were entirely absent. The great devastation of industry, the decimation of whole areas by war and deportations by the Germans, had very evidently left their mark on the Ukraine.

Troops of the Red Army were everywhere. The great hall of the railway station of Kiev was packed with them streaming in from all over the occupied zones of Central and Eastern Europe. For Kiev was one of the demobilisation centres. Military transport offices and information bureaux were overwhelmed with work and it was easy to see how anxious the Russian soldier was to get back into " civvies " again. It was convincing evidence that the mass of the Russian people want peace and a return to civilian life.

As for the cultural life of the Ukraine, nothing so clearly showed the great change for the better in Communist Russia than the flourishing state of native art, drama and music. Naturally I was

somewhat at a disadvantage, for I did not know Ukrainian, a very distinct Slavonic language of which I only knew a few words. However, everyone speaks Great or Muscovite Russian, the " lingua franca " of the Union, so when I was taken by that most friendly guide, who helped me so much in Kiev, Mr. Poltoradsky, the Director of the Ukrainian Society for Cultural Relations, to see a modern Ukrainian play, both he and his wife had to do a lot of translating for me. The play was by an Ukrainian writer, Kornechuk, and it was called *A Visit to Dsvonkovy*. It was a play on the problems facing the Ukrainian peasant in the immediate post-war period and it depicted the various tendencies in village life; those who wanted change, those who didn't, those (like some Red Army men) who were tired and just didn't care. I formed the impression that the post-war problems of Ukrainian villagers were much the same as those of most countries, including our own.

The Ukrainian audience at the theatre was most interesting to study. The tough, solid features and frames of the Muscovites were absent. Instead of grey eyes and flaxen hair, I saw many dark features and was introduced to people with semi-Tartar names indicating clearly that the influence of the East had at one time been strong.

One evening I was entertained at dinner by the chief editors and journalists of Kiev. There was the editor of the Ukrainian *Pravda*, the editor of *Soviet Ukraine*, the Ukrainian Telegraph Agency man and the woman editor of *Ukrainian Art*. They were all Communists, except I think the lady, but I found them, and all the other Communists I met in the Ukraine, distinctly less dogmatic than their Moscow counterparts. The soft air of the Ukraine seemed to temper the rigours of economic theory. We discussed Anglo-Russian relations and the existing difficulties with frankness and friendliness. There was a general feeling that the differences should not be regarded too tragically and certainly not as insurmountable. We also discussed Russia's relations with the States on her western borders. They said that the relations between Ukrainians and Poles had greatly improved since the formation of the new Polish Government and the end of the Polish Government in London. They tried to assure me that

the Soviet Government was not trying to force Communism on Poland. It knew how hopeless such an attempt would be. It was not trying to export its own special brand of industrial democracy into Poland and was allowing other parties besides Communists to work there. But it did object to any party in Poland or the border countries which contained pro-German or Fascist elements, and it went one stage farther by objecting to parties with a definitely anti-Russian bias, like sections of the National Democratic Party of Poland.

In all the countries of South-East Europe bordering Russia the conditions, although differing in detail, are much the same in principle as those existing in Poland. There seems, in fact, to be arising in all these border countries a form of democracy which is not the Soviet form nor is it of our Western type. For one must realise that conditions of tolerance, to the degree that goes with long training in self-government, just do not exist in Eastern Europe.

Taking all these facts into consideration, I was prepared to believe those Ukrainian editors and journalists whom I met in Kiev when they said that, as long as these border countries like Poland, Hungary and Roumania, did not become a centre of anti-Russian intrigue, they were not concerned with the form of Government that existed there. That these countries were, between the two wars, centres of intrigue against Russia, there is not the slightest doubt. It is, of course, also true that Russia will use her influence to give moral support to Communist movements in these countries, and here perhaps my Kiev informants did not tell me the full story. But I acquired a strong feeling that these Ukrainian Communists know only too well how weak Communism is in some of these border countries, particularly in Poland. It seemed then that their policy was to create political conditions in these countries in which Communists took an important part in the Government. Even so, they realised they had to be wary lest anti-Russian movements sprung up among the Catholic peasants of Poland and Hungary, movements in which nationalism and religion would make a powerful combination. I formed the opinion while I was in Kiev that the Ukraine has a

definite influence in the councils of the Moscow Commissars. Being the next greatest Republic of the Union after that of Great Russia, its views carry weight in the Kremlin.

I ended my stay in Kiev with a very pleasant dinner. It was given to me by the members of the Ukrainian Academy of Science and Arts, and an eminent biochemist, an historian and a poet were among my hosts. I was presented with an illustrated copy of Shevchenko's works. At this gathering I noted, as I did in Moscow, that the old Russian intelligentsia with its distinguished men of science and letters was still in existence in the Ukraine. Indeed it flourished far more than when I was in the Ukraine before the Revolution. Conversation was free and we discussed everything without dogma or preconceived ideas. There could indeed be no doubt that the October Revolution had brought about a great cultural renaissance in the Ukraine.

CHAPTER XI

A VISIT TO COLLECTIVE FARMS

ON A cold November day in 1945, I found myself speeding along the chausee in the Western Ukraine in the region of Zhitomir, near the Polish frontier. We passed through tracts of pine forest, then open country where we could see the great folds in the earth, so typical of the Russian plain. On the top of the gentle rises stood little windmills, below them marshes, rough meadows and sheets of water. We passed villages of whitewashed houses. This was the heart of the Ukraine which had inspired Pushkin to write his famous verse *The Still Ukrainian Night* and had prompted Gogol to his great descriptive passages of natural scenery in *Dead Souls*.

A herd of cattle was grazing on the withered grass and two youths stood tending them. They were from the livestock brigade of the neighbouring collective farm. There was little nourishment in the grass but they picked up bits in the day time and came into the collective farm buildings at night for hay and shelter, for a cold wind was blowing, some light snow falling and ice was beginning to form on little sheets of water in the hollows.

We turned down a side road along a row of poplars. Soon typical Ukrainian peasants' houses began to line the dirt track. This was the collective farm " Pervoye Mai ". The houses were oblong, one-storeyed and made of logs plastered over and whitewashed, with thatched roofs. The window shutters were painted in bright colours, often with decorative patterns. In some cases there were gaps where a cottage had been burnt by the Germans before they left. Some had been rebuilt, but a few were still derelict. In the main, however, the village was intact now. We came to a house like the rest, but with red flags flying from the roof. This was the house where the business and administration of the collective farm went on. Nobody was there, so someone

went for the farm manager. On hearing that a foreigner had come, he complained that he had not been told, so that there was not time to kill some geese for an evening feast. The chairman of the Collective Farm Committee arrived and other members of the management. The chairman of the Village Soviet, like our Parish Council, came too. She was a woman whose partisan husband had been killed by the Germans; she had a fine thoughtful face and evidently had moral authority in the village. The schoolmaster appeared, a young and enthusiastic man, also the vice-chairman of the Farm Management Committee, a peasant veteran with a Tolstoyan beard and face. It was not all tragedy in the village but it was in the background, and there was hardly a house that had not lost one or two of its members. But everyone was so busy building up the farm from scratch that it seemed they had little time to be miserable. Moreover, life was bubbling up from below once more and there were going to be six weddings in the village in the course of the next few days.

While talking with the various members of the village who held positions of authority, I found myself having to explain what life was like in rural England. They seemed to understand that private farms and individual holdings, both large and small, were the usual methods of farming in England and did not seem predisposed to think any the worse of us for that. But they were interested to know how much a British agricultural worker earned in their money (an almost impossible thing to state with any accuracy). They wanted to know how our yields per acre compared with theirs, how much a ploughman ploughs in a day with us and what our village schools were like. There was no assumption that everything was better with them. In this way we exchanged information for about an hour and a half, during which time a delegation from a neighbouring village had come and joined in the discussion.

Then I put questions to them and they told me all about the working of their collective farm system. The Management Committee of the farm, which was elected by every adult, male and female, in the village, arranged the work on the common fields and was responsible to the provincial Government for the

crops which were grown and for the deliveries. The local office of the Department of Agriculture had to confirm the elections to the Farm Management Committees so as to ensure that competent people composed them. I was assured that very rarely was the power exercised to change a Committee and still more rarely was anyone appointed from outside who had not been elected by the village.

I have been informed that each Republic of the Union had autonomy in all matters concerning agriculture, and, while that is true up to a point, I could not help noticing that the Department of Agriculture in Kiev did not seem much in evidence. I was unable to contact any responsible official while I was there and the statistical information on Ukrainian agriculture seemed only obtainable in Moscow. Thus it is probable that the general agricultural plan and food-production campaign of the Union is centralised, which is not unnatural in view of the vital importance of food production for Russia. But the provincial Soviets and the local Collective Farm Committees did seem to have autonomy in matters concerning the execution of the plan and its details.

Each member of the village had his own holding of from two or three acres behind his house and here he kept two or three cows in a little shed which he probably had built himself. He also reared a few calves, kept some pigs and poultry, raised crops to feed them, and grew some fruit and vegetables for his family. This bit of land was absolutely his own and he could will it to a relation at his death but he could not sell it, and if he did not want it, he must hand it back to the Collective Farm Management for further disposal. Each peasant was under an obligation to work so many days in the year on the common fields of the collective farm. I found that, at least on this farm, they worked more than the allotted days, for I examined the time sheets. They were organised into brigades by the Farm Management Committee. Some of the brigades worked on the fields, others looked after the livestock, a third brigade did general work wherever needed, a fourth was engaged in constructional work or looking after the implements. A fixed rate of pay was arranged for each job. If a man cut a bigger area of hay, hoed a larger number of rows of

sugar beet or ploughed a larger area than the average fixed, he was paid an extra rate which often amounted to from fifty to a hundred per cent above the basic rate. This was the incentive to good work. The farm manager said to me half jokingly that members of the brigade often earned more than he did. Payment was made partly in cash and partly in kind. Thus a man might receive a sack of flour or some meat or perhaps sugar, eggs or poultry, as well as hard cash. This led to considerable practice of domestic economy. They bake their own bread, all the meat, eggs, poultry, fruit and vegetables come either from the man's own holding or from the common farm. With the money, he and his wife bought household goods, when there were any, and due to the shortage here again domestic economy was practised. For instance, wooden plates and spoons were made locally, the women sewed shirts, made curtains and even wove carpets as they did in Tsarist times. The carpets were hung round their divans and both this and the design on them indicated the strong influence of the Tartars on this part of Russia. All this type of domestic economy was typical of agricultural communities not only in Russia but throughout all Eastern Europe.

The question often arises whether the peasants tend to concentrate their attention upon their own holdings and neglect the work on the collective farm. I could see no evidence of this on the farms that I visited, for the standard of cultivation was as good on the common fields as in the individual holdings. This seemed to show that the Russian collective farm of today succeeds fairly well in balancing the desire of the peasant to have a bit of land and livestock for himself with his readiness to work in a collective undertaking.[1]

In my walks round Ukrainian collective farms, I could see what a difference there was in village life compared to what it had been in the Ukraine when I was there before the Revolution. Then the whole village life was centred around the great house containing

[1] In the autumn of 1946 since I wrote the above, Central Government in Moscow took action against some collective farms in the Ukraine where the peasants had been increasing their holdings at the expense of the common land. The slowness of increase in tractor production during 1946 had continued to hamper collective farm production and had encouraged this development.

the nobleman or landlord. The peasant had little prospect of a freer and wider life unless he emigrated to the richer land of Siberia where there were no landlords. In the early days, the output of the little peasant holdings in European Russia was meagre. The land was scratched with primitive ploughs such as were in use in the days of the Tartars. There were no means of dealing with floods and droughts which often destroyed the crops, causing famine. Yet in spite of this, Russia used to export corn to Western Europe, corn which was really taken out of the peasant's mouth, for he and his family were systematically underfed. Some of this export corn was produced on large farms directly under the control of a landowner who used more modern implements, but much of it was sold by peasants in payment of taxes or delivered to landlords in the form of feudal dues. Wide stretches of land, called the landlord's latifundia, were farmed by the peasants in a primitive manner and they had to deliver anything from a third to a half of the crop to the landlord. To make matters worse the peasants held their land in common, not a bad thing in itself, as subsequent developments showed, but very bad in that particular form. For they redistributed the land every five or six years in order that no peasant should have an advantage, and the land was parcelled out in long strips so that each man received a variety of soil types. Approaching a Russian village in those times, I used to see these long strips of land like ribbons on the landscape. It made it impossible for a peasant to do any improvements on his land and the whole system gave a premium to idleness, although it certainly was a tribute to the Russian habit of holding together in communities to meet danger, whether it was Tartar invasion, Tsarist tax-gatherers or landlords' bailiffs.

In the days before the October Revolution the typical Russian village consisted of two rows of one-storeyed wooden cottages on each side of a dirt track. Each cottage had a small courtyard surrounded by a wooden stockade and entered by a high gate. The primitive farm implements were kept in a shed behind the stockade. At one end of the village was the church with its onion-shaped cupolas and nearby the house of the priest. At the other

end was the " Isba " where the peasants stored corn at harvest time as a reserve against famine in future years. The peasants' cattle and sheep were taken out to the common pasture grounds where they were tended by a man and boy and at night they came back with tinkling bells to their respective owners' sheds. Each knew his place. The peasants spent many hours of the day sitting on wooden benches along village streets. The old men and women sat and gazed, told each other tales or made caustic and often very apt remarks about passers-by; the young men and women played accordions and often danced. Food consisted of black rye bread in the north and grey wheat bread in the Ukraine, potatoes and vegetable soup. Sometimes they ate a millet porridge, but only rarely meat. The men worked hard spasmodically and so did the women at certain times. The coming of spring meant a terrific burst of activity, for life in the Russian village is governed by the climate which pulsates in fits and starts. Spring and early summer meant work morning, noon and night with a short repose before harvest. Then rest again until the autumn sowing and then the long nights of winter when everyone in the Russian village hibernates. I often think that this extreme alternation of the climate is reflected in the Russian character and accounts for long periods of sluggishness followed by feverish activity which is a feature reflected very much in Russian history. Indeed, Russian history is the story of struggle against inhospitable Nature from above and against truculent raiders from the East. The Russian State was built up as a result of this struggle. But in the Russian village before the October Revolution the peasants had, in addition to their struggle against the rigours of the climate, to give up a large part of their produce to a landlord who did little or nothing for them. Any agricultural improvements were carried out only on the landlord's home farm. Occasionally a little charity was doled out which served to undermine the independent spirit of the peasants. But the peasants had a saying, " We belong to the landlord but the land is really ours ", and they put it into practice soon after the fall of Tsar Nicolas II in February 1917.

I remember visiting villages in the Province of Samara on the Lower Volga in August 1917 before the Bolshevik *coup d'état* and

I found that even then, during the mild Liberal regime of Kerensky, the peasants were beginning to take over and work the landlord's latifundia and even his home farm without payment of the usual rents and dues. They then elected committees, which I saw at work, to supervise the acquisition of the land. Sometimes this was accompanied by violence when the landlord's agents organised resistance, but sometimes it went off quite peacefully. For some years after this there was considerable chaos in the Russian villages. Some of the peasants were sharper than others, more unscrupulous or more industrious or just had more luck and began to grow richer than the others. Fear arose that they would become the landlords of the future and the general feeling of the village was against this, assisted, of course, by the Soviet authorities. For the Bolsheviks by this time had come into power after the fall of the Liberal Kerensky regime. Committees of peasants were formed in each village to watch and control the rich peasant and money lender or " Kulak ", as he was called. Finally, during the course of the years 1930–3 he was " liquidated " in true Russian fashion. It was during these years that the Soviet Government decided that, in order to bring Russian agriculture up-to-date, it was necessary to reform the whole system of land tenure and utilisation. Instead of having the primitive village commune which distributed long narrow strips of land every few years among individual peasant holders, it was decided to farm the bulk of the land in common, combining all the petty little holdings, thereby forming large fields of three to four hundred acres in a block which could be ploughed, worked and sown by tractor cultivation. Thereby deeper cultivations were effected, the land was worked more efficiently and labour was saved for other work such as tending improved herds of cattle and for small processing industries like creameries, bacon factories and local flour mills for offal production. For a time this change was resisted by the larger peasants who did not want to come into a co-operative scheme like this, but the rigours of the regime were let loose on them and those who were not liquidated ultimately submitted.

Thus the Russian collective farm came into existence. It was really the old village commune adapted to the cultivation of large

blocks of land by tractors and modern implements. There is no question that the output of Russian agriculture has risen compared to the pre-Revolution days, and the country was able to produce the food to build up her industrial strength and war potential in the inter-war years and finally managed to keep alive during the terrible German invasion.

I have made this digression into the past in order to put the Ukrainian village of today into perspective. The difference is striking to say the least. For instance, the squire's mansion in one village that I visited was used now as a local hospital. In another village the mansion was a secondary school. The affairs of the village, both farm management and local public business, were run by committees elected by the peasants. On matters concerning overall food production, directions were given to the local committees by the Provincial Departments of Agriculture, and these in their turn received certain directions from Moscow. But nothing of major importance was decided without conferences between the centre and the locality. The collective farms had their taxes to pay in kind to the Commissariat for Food and big discussions took place over the assessments which were based on five year averages of yield. I found, for instance, that the collective farm in the village, " Pervoye Mai ", was fairly typical. Here war damage was severe, losses being greatest in livestock and machinery, next in manpower and lastly in houses destroyed. I was shown the collective farm balance sheet for 1945. The turnover was half a million roubles, half what it had been in the last year of peace. Nevertheless, when I looked round and sensed the atmosphere of confidence with which the collective farmers were facing their tasks, I could not fail to see how much greater were the chances of speedy recovery in the Ukraine of today than there would have been in Tsarist Ukraine.

I went to look at the collective farm buildings. Some had been burnt by the Germans but were not being rebuilt. I found that the spotlessly clean collective granary contained all types of grain ready to deliver to the State elevators or to supply the neighbouring collective farms with seed. I looked at the collective livestock sheds. There were some sixty pigs being fed on swill and potatoes.

In the main cowshed were sixty Freisian cows, reparations from Germany, to replace those that had been driven away. Milk yields were not very high compared to our standards but it is not easy to make comparisons because they were only just restarting after the war. The cattle were being properly fed, but I did not think the stalls were clean enough to pass our accredited milk tests. In general I noticed a rather large staff attending to the cattle, and at the collective flour mill, where corn from the common fund was being brought down for milling, large numbers of people were standing about idle. In general it appeared that at least twice as many people were necessary to do a job than would be required with us. The figures I got from the management committees of three farms shows that there was roughly one man for seven acres. In this country we have roughly one man for twenty acres. The yield per acre for the farms I saw in the Ukraine was not bad considering the difficulties they had been through, and varied from twenty to thirty bushels to the acre. They claimed to have got ten tons of potatoes to the acre but admitted that this was exceptional and not the average. The output per man acre was clearly much lower than with us, but then one has to realise that agriculture is not regarded solely from the point of view of production and economy, and that there is also a social aspect to be considered. It is State policy in Russia to keep about sixty per cent of the population on the land at a fair standard of living. That standard is not as high in money income as it is in the West, but it is far higher than it used to be.

I had proof that the farmers of the collective farm, " Pervoye Mai ", were ready to make sacrifices to restart their collective farm herds. After the war the villagers found nothing on their return, but they had in about six months built up a herd of about two hundred and fifty calves and yearlings, partly from what had been given them by the Government, partly from the stock given them by collective farmers in the part of Russia that had not been invaded, and partly from contributions from the collective farmers themselves. For they had been able to keep a few stock in the forests where the Germans could not get at them. Now they were lending some of them to restart the common herd.

I went on to look at the neighbouring collective farm, " Voroshilov ", and on the way crossed some of the cultivated lands. A nine-course system of crop rotation was being practised with two-year clover leys and sugar beet, potatoes and beans alternating with straw crops. There was very little mechanisation now except for what could be borrowed from a State tractor depot some distance away. Horses were being used again. I saw the ruins of a combine harvester which had been deliberately blown up by the Germans before they left.

I went to the village school where work was just finishing for the day. Three hundred and fifty children up to the age of seven were being taught by fourteen teachers, that is one to twenty-three children. But I understood that many of the teachers had not passed a training course and were probably pupil teachers. In fact, what I saw was proof that the Soviet regime is faced with the same problem that everyone has in the immediate post-war phase, namely a dearth of teachers and of buildings. In this case the buildings were not bad but children from other villages where the schools had been burnt had been brought in. Consequently there was some overcrowding which it was hoped would soon be remedied. The senior pupils over eleven were sent to the senior school of the region, which covered several villages, as with us. But instead of buses being provided by the local authority, the children were sent by horse and cart provided by the Village Soviet or parish council.

Then I returned to " Pervoye Mai ". A biting north wind swept over the land. We pressed our fur caps over our ears, buried our chins in our scarves and strode across the open plain in the teeth of it. The land of Russia, the great wide plain of the Ukraine which lay around us, is a fertile land but one which will only yield up its riches to hard work. The Russians have conquered this plain in the past by working in colonies like one great family; they fought off the Tartars as a great family; they resisted the Poles and the Western world as a great family; they settled on the land as a great family; they stood up to the landlord as a great family; and now that he has gone, they are farming the land together as a great family.

This is indeed eternal Russia as she has come down through the ages.

I went into peasants' houses. Each had two rooms. In the first was a large stove where they cooked and on the top of which some of the family could sleep. In the other room were beds, another stove and a divan beside it. Everything was spotlessly clean. Rough handmade carpets hung on the walls and the curtains were neatly embroidered with Ukrainian peasant patterns. At one end of the room on the wall was a portrait of Stalin. This was where the Tsar used once to be, when he was the Father of his People. Now there is another and a better Father. At the other end of the room were the icons, the Madonna and St. Nicolas, just like it used to be years ago. They told me that the church had been rebuilt, for the old one had been burnt in the war and they had a priest now to serve three parishes. I was made to sit down and taste some Ukrainian "borsch" or vegetable soup. The keen wind had given me an appetite, but I was warned to be careful, as big things were shortly expected of me in the eating and drinking line. After that I visited the cowshed. Each collective farmer has one of his own, sometimes a separate building, sometimes, as in this case, a lean-to against the house. There were two cows and eight pigs in conditions not so good as in the collective farm building. In the holding outside was a cherry orchard, some apple trees and vegetables, millet and buck wheat for porridge or "kasha". The holders can keep all the manure they make on their holdings. In North Russia, where the land is poorer, in many collective farms the peasants are under an obligation to hand over part of the manure from the individual holdings to the common lands.

The household budget of an Ukrainian peasant presupposes that about half of the food he consumes will be handed over to him as wages in kind, such as flour, millet, potatoes and some meat. He will also provide himself with eggs, poultry, milk, fruit and vegetables. The peasant of "Pervoye Mai" has earned about a hundred and ninety roubles a month in cash on an average throughout the year. It is impossible to translate this into sterling values, but for the sake of comparison one might say that

a month's wages would enable a peasant to buy about six hand towels or two simple chairs. The money would go farther, of course, if it were possible to get these articles on the ration system. But when I was there, hardly any such articles could be obtained in this way, though a certain amount of secondhand goods was available at high prices on the open market. I was informed that it was hoped to double the income of the peasants during 1946 and also to make more household goods available. But I could see quite clearly that the economy of the villages that I visited was based largely on wages in kind and domestic industry in the household.

These Ukrainian collective farms that I saw were fairly typical of village life in Russia as a whole. Life is not easy but a very fair standard of living can be obtained if a family is prepared to accept half its wages in kind. I cannot imagine a British farm worker and his wife accepting conditions like this. It presumes a considerable degree of natural economy and domestic industry in the household. But it is suited to Eastern Europe, especially now that the feudal landlords have disappeared. This type of rural economy vanished in the West with the coming of monetary economy and the Industrial Revolution of the early nineteenth century.

I ended my time in the Ukrainian villages with a very jolly evening gathering which showed the Ukrainian peasants in their most hospitable and at the same time their most natural mood. I felt there was nothing put on about their hospitality. I was led off to a peasant's house, where in the largest of the two rooms about twenty people sat down to a big spread. There were the managers of two collective farms, the heads of labour brigades, the officials of the local Soviet, the village doctor and the schoolmaster, and young women from various houses stood about in picturesque costume and served us. A meal consisting of various tasty forms of pork was put before us, followed by apple cakes (" pirozhny ") and vodka. There were a lot of speeches and I had to reply. In the course of my remarks one interesting little incident occurred. I was saying how much I had felt for the Ukrainians who had been invaded twice in a generation by the Germans. A voice interrupted, " By the Nazis." I stood

corrected, for evidently these peasants agreed with Stalin when he made that famous speech in the winter of 1941 with the passage, " Hitlers may come and go but the German people go on."

They started to sing Ukrainian songs. I asked if the old national song of the Ukraine was sung—" The Ukraine is yet not lost ". I was told that it was not sung now. It was considered too pessimistic and was only appropriate for the days of Tsarism when the Ukraine was not recognised. Instead they sang a new song—" Let Father Stalin come and visit us ". This, they told me, they used to sing right under the noses of the Germans, who did not understand what it meant. I could see no better proof than this that a great change had come over the Ukraine since I was there last. The old longing for an independence, which was in fact unattainable, and indeed was never seriously meant except by a few fanatics, had been replaced by a deep faith in co-partnership with Great Russia in the Union of Soviet Republics. Two invasions by the Germans and one by the Poles in one generation had contributed to bring this about.

CHAPTER XII

RUSSIAN RECONSTRUCTION AND FOREIGN TRADE

ALL THAT I have described so far should serve to show that the Soviet Government has a very formidable problem of internal economic reconstruction before it. Indeed, it is true to say that for years to come the principal energies of the Russian people will have to be directed to this problem. That in itself should be sufficient indication that Russia is not likely to harbour aggressive designs against other countries. Even if she had any desire to do so, there is abundant evidence that she has not the material basis on which to fight another modern war and is not likely to have it for many years. Quite apart from this, there is the human problem and the psychological effect of the loss of the country's manpower. Marshal Stalin has officially given the figures of Russian manpower losses in the late war as eight millions and this appeared to cover not only those under arms who were killed and wounded but also the civilians who were transported to Axis countries for slave labour and never came back. I have every reason to believe that, for reasons of policy and prestige abroad, this figure is an underestimate. Some of the earlier figures are probably more nearly correct. They put the military losses alone at somewhere near ten millions and the civilian casualities as at least equal to that figure. For my part I think it is a fair guess that Russia has lost not less than twenty millions of her people, and the figure may be even greater. It is known that her commanders, owing to the technical equipment of her armed forces being definitely inferior to that of the German Army in the earlier part of the war, had to be more lavish with human life than the Western commanders had to be. This also explains why the Russians were so insistent during the war with demands to " open a second front now " even if it meant colossal

losses of manpower for an objective which might not be achieved. For they were prepared to incur such losses in the East to counterbalance their technical inferiority to the Germans. Moreover, their immense reserve of manpower and high birthrate made these losses less catastrophic than they would have been for the Western Allies.

On the other hand, these losses are serious enough for Russia, even if one puts them at the modest official figures, for they have followed after a series of other losses, which had made their cumulative effect even greater. Quite apart from the losses of the First World War and the Civil War following the October Revolution, which no doubt were largely made good by the birthrate in the twenties, there come the serious effects of the great " purges " of the thirties. If in this latter upheaval the losses were not so great quantitatively, they were very great qualitatively. There is no doubt that at this time many future national leaders, military experts, scientists and technicians were swept away and the country would ill-afford to spare them. The Russian habit of seeing red and liquidating innocent and guilty alike, in order to ensure that none of the guilty escape, has borne bitter fruits. But it was the sort of thing that was bound to happen in a country where, by tradition and history, individual rights are regarded as of less importance than what is thought to be the public welfare. The second German war, coming on top of all this, has caused a further and even greater drain on expert manpower. So that there is in Russia today a great dearth of technicians, of leaders of first quality, and of big literary figures, although the latter is partly, as I indicated above, caused by the censorship. Russia is therefore more poorly equipped to undertake a big reconstruction drive than at any time since the October Revolution and the Civil War. This is undoubtedly causing internal strain and tension but not such as is likely to lead to breakdown or to endanger the regime. In part it explains Russian truculence in Press and wireless propaganda and at international conferences. It is part of a policy of pretending to be stronger than you really are and keeping up the spirit of your people at home. On the other hand, any unbiased observer in Russia these days is bound to be impressed with

the enthusiasm among the masses aroused by Russia's victories in the war, belief in the national leaders and confidence in the future of Russia. And as long as that spirit prevails there is every reason to believe that Russia will overcome her internal reconstruction difficulties. That these are formidable there can be no shadow of doubt.

If one takes a line from Leningrad and draws it south-east across Russia to Mozdok in the North Caucasus, one can say that west of that line the destruction of towns and villages, factories, bridges, railway workshops, mines and blast furnaces, has been anything from fifty to a hundred per cent; moreover, even two years after the expulsion of the German Army, reconstruction work had hardly begun. About fifteen per cent of the population of Russia is homeless and living in huts and dug-outs. The slow progress has been due to the need to restore at least some of the coal mines and primary industries first of all in order to get the reconstruction industries working. Incidentally, eighty per cent of the brick and cement works have been destroyed. Until these reconstruction industries are re-established no great progress is possible, and it did not appear that much progress had been made in the autumn and early winter of 1945. Only one quarter of the Don coal mines were working at that time, and while it was reported that steel production had reached seventy-five per cent of pre-war, this was probably true only for some areas and by no means true for the whole country. Oil production was known to have fallen very heavily, but great efforts were being made to raise it again. The wearing out of machinery and the difficulty of getting spare parts had kept the output of the Baku oilfields well below pre-war. Timber production is barely enough to meet urgent reconstruction commitments, and leaves next to nothing for export for some time to come.

The Government is, therefore, faced with a very similar situation as the one it faced during the first and second Five Year Plans, when they restricted the people's consumption of everyday goods in order to raise the production of capital goods. The capital investment needed in the coal, iron, steel, oil, general

engineering and textile industries is enormous. Various Commissariats for capital reconstruction in these industries were set up in 1945 and early 1946 to take on this special job. They have had first call on skilled labour and materials. This means that whatever the increase in the national income of Russia, from this time onwards more than half of it will go to capital and not to consumers' goods. This makes the condition of the people often very hard. For instance, large numbers were homeless in that part of the Ukraine that I visited: the authorities were faced with the task of deciding whether to leave these people to live in huts and dug-outs for two or three years more, and thereby ensure that when the housing drive got under way it really would get the job done rapidly and efficiently, or whether to begin now and get poorer houses built more slowly. In the latter case, although work could start now, it would probably be finished no sooner than if the work was postponed altogether till the capital reconstruction plan was completed. Thus, when I was in Kiev, I was told that throughout the Ukraine it was roughly estimated that five hundred thousand houses had been completely destroyed in the villages alone. In two years since the liberation of the Ukraine ninety-six thousand houses had been rebuilt. It is reasonable to assume that the rate of forty-eight thousand houses a year would be increased in subsequent years, but even so it was clear that it would probably take five years before these villages could be fully restored. It was further estimated that five hundred and fifty thousand houses had been destroyed in the towns of the Ukraine. From what I could see, no rebuilding here had begun at all. In the villages some work had taken place with local materials. But in the towns this was not the case. I found the experts very busy on new types of bricks made from straw and bitumen, and on building blocks made from a calcareous clay dug near Odessa, which should greatly speed up building. But again, the manufacture of this in sufficient quantities will take considerable time.

The condition of the agricultural industry is the same in essence as that of other industries. The best land in European Russia, which is in the Ukraine, has been devastated worse than any other part of the country. Of the ninety thousand tractors

operating there before the war, only a fraction are now in use. It is probable that only fifteen per cent of the pre-war head of cattle are left. Collective herds are being slowly rebuilt by State purchase of livestock from the undamaged eastern territories and from reparations stock. There is a big drive to deliver tractors to the Ukraine which, no doubt, will in time have the desired effect. For the whole collective farm system of Russia is linked up with mechanised agriculture, and the collective system has become the most effective method of raising agricultural production in Russia.

Thus, the re-establishment of agriculture in the Ukraine is virtually dependent on the metallurgical industries in the Don and Donetz basin providing the tractors and machinery without which collective farming is impossible. Indeed, the Soviet authorities have all the time to keep before the peasants the supreme task of reconstituting the collective farm lands while at the same time allowing them to devote a certain amount of time to their private holdings. The collective farms need tractors which are not there. The small holdings can be kept going in the old-fashioned way with a couple of horses and a wooden plough, but that, of course, will not solve the food problem in Russia.

I could not see any widespread evidence of neglect of the collective lands in the part of the Ukraine that I visited, though I heard of areas that had fallen out of cultivation, more particularly in the south-west. I doubt if more than twenty per cent of the land of the Ukraine has become disused as a result of the war, but, on the other hand, one must assume that the average yields per acre have fallen. I doubt if the harvest of 1945 was more than sixty per cent of pre-war, taking all factors into consideration, though improvement is to be expected. The absence of livestock will be serious and will affect soil fertility in other than the black earth zone, but it is hoped to increase the number of pigs fairly rapidly. However, it will not be easy to re-establish soil fertility in the sand and loam areas for some years to come. In general it may be said that it will take at least five years before Ukrainian agriculture is brought back to its pre-war level. The same remark applies to White Russia—the area lying between Poland and Russia round Minsk—and in the Cossack lands of the Don. The

North Caucasus is less affected, while Western Siberia and the lower Volga provinces have on balance raised the area of cultivation, though probably not the yields per acre.

All these facts will have an important bearing on the prospect of Russia engaging in foreign trade once more. For the great capital reconstruction drive will inevitably mean that there will be an enormous demand inside the country for the raw material which she formerly exported. For instance, there is not likely to be any Russian oil on the world markets for some years, nor is Russia likely to export cereals except to her neighbours who are in serious need. Small " propaganda " exports, like what was sent to France in 1946, may continue but nothing large enough to affect Russia's trade balance and importing capacity.

There is only one article she can easily export—timber. Here the prospects are brighter, but there are many difficulties in the way even here. During the war, production fell by twenty per cent and the home demand has now become so great that there is little left for export. The " Gosplan " (Department of Economic Planning) has zoned the timber resources of Russia with the idea of economising in transport, and allotted certain forest areas for home consumption and certain areas for export. Thus the timber from the whole of the central forest area stretching from north of Moscow to the White Sea and eastwards to the Urals is to go by rail and river to the Ukraine, South Russia and the North Caucasus. The areas left for export are the forests of the Petchora, the Urals and Western Siberia. It is thought that it will be possible to ship this by Arctic waters to some port of transhipment on the White Sea, where ocean-going vessels could take over. The forest resources of Western and Central Siberia are enormous and the Soviet authorities are talking of extensive logging operations in the basis of the Ankara river, but there are technical difficulties in these regions. Some Soviet authorities talk of turning out timber almost at once at the rate of two hundred and fifty thousand cubic metres a year. On their own figures this will require one million two hundred thousand workers logging on the old style with horses, axes and hand-saws. That quantity cannot possibly be produced by these methods. It might be possible if

American power-saws could be used, but it has been found that in practice they are not suitable. Overhead costs are too high because in the Russian forests the trees are smaller and farther apart. A Russian engineer is, however, working on an adaptation of the American saw which may suit Russian conditions. But this has as yet to be tried out on an extensive scale. Therefore, there is still uncertainty about the prospects of extensive timber exports from Russia in the immediate future, although this is the commodity which is the most likely to get going.

The prospects of Russian trade with Great Britain and America, therefore, depend in the near future largely on the possibilities of credits. But here at once we enter the sphere of politics. Britain is unable to give credit, while the American Congress in its present mood may think that this would be a good opportunity to impose political conditions on the Soviet Union. The Russians have their own ideological world, and economic difficulties will not make them endanger it by accepting political conditions for a foreign loan. For instance, they will never agree to the American idea of uncontrolled private enterprise operating either in Russia or even in the States bordering Russia. They know that this kind of thing has led to political influence in the past and was the economic basis of the *cordon sanitaire* of the inter-war years. They will not permit the undermining of their controlled internal economy, nor for that matter will they relax their present hold over publicity and public opinion.

The Russians are a tough people and have survived the convulsions of the forcible collectivisation of the second agrarian revolution in the early 'thirties and two Five Year Plans for quick-time industrialisation without foreign aid. They think they can pass through such a time again, if necessary, and succeed. I think they are justified in their confidence. As soon as the Russians can export timber on an appreciable scale, it will be possible for the Western Powers to send Russia a large amount of electrical and general engineering goods which we have specialised in and which the Russians like. This stage will not be reached yet, but, when it is, it will speed reconstruction in Russia.

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Since writing the above, nine months have passed and the condition of Russia has deteriorated owing to a disastrous drought which ruined the harvest in the Ukraine and in parts of Central Russia during the summer of 1946. Some improvement in coal output took place during that year, but there was virtually no increase in general industrial production and, but for a good harvest in Siberia and East European Russia, there would have been widespread famine. All plans for relaxing rationing have been put off and food prices on the free markets have risen substantially.

All this has been reflected in the insistent drive of Russian diplomacy to secure at all costs and regardless of consequences to the countries concerned extensive reparation payments out of current production from Germany and Austria. The only other alternative to this is an American loan to Russia. Yet this for the moment has been rendered impossible by the tense political atmosphere between the two countries to which, of course, the truculent Russian Press and wireless propaganda against the Western Powers has contributed a lot. In general, it would be true to say, more so now perhaps than a year ago, that unless Russia receives assistance from abroad in some form or other she is not likely to lift her pressure for German reparations. On the other hand, if she gets no assistance from abroad in the form of a loan her speed of recovery will be greatly retarded and she will remain a constant centre of political intrigue against the Western Powers. In this connection she is probably relying on what she thinks may be useful to her, namely Left-Wing and Liberal Opposition groups in Britain and America to assist her in obtaining German reparations on her own terms, and thereby speeding up her internal recovery. The task of statesmanship among the Western Powers is to induce Russia to come out of her self-imposed isolation and to accept disinterested economic assistance in return for dropping a reparations policy which will make the recovery of Central Europe impossible.

CHAPTER XIII

THROUGH CENTRAL RUSSIA

ALTHOUGH the authorities seemed willing to extend my permit to stay in Russia for very much longer, I had to get on my way. I wanted to leave Russia via the Caucasus and Persia as this would enable me to travel down through Central Russia, a line of country that I had been over several times in former years, and I might thereby get a glimpse of the changes that had taken place. I would also see something of Asiatic Russia which I had visited and lived in years ago.

Rail journey is still the best method of travel in Russia. Apart from one or two motor chausees between Moscow and the western frontier, and between Kiev and Poland, there are few good roads and long-distance motoring is a form of transport that has yet to be developed. Civil aviation is rather more advanced and there are air services between some of the principal towns, but priorities are not easy to obtain and, moreover, the services are extremely irregular, particularly in winter. It seems that the Russians will not fly civil planes unless the sky is clear and, as this is rarely the case in winter in North and Central Russia, delays are interminable. The old railway may be slow, but it is sure and, moreover, enables you to study the country at leisure, for the halts at wayside stations are often long.

The authorities kindly arranged a comfortable berth for me on the daily Moscow-Baku train which leaves the Kursk station at midnight. I said goodbye to Moscow in snow, frost and fog, and armed myself with enough bread, sausages, cheese, sugar, sardines and bisçuits for five days. My travelling companions were very different from those on the journey from Moscow to the Ukraine. I felt at once the influence of the East. Dark and wide-eyed Armenians and Georgians, slit-eyed Tartars were now my travelling companions. I was reminded again that Russia is an Asiatic

power and the people of the East look to Mother Moscow for guidance and come to visit her.

Next morning early the train was pulling into Orel. How often had we heard the name of this town—" Aryol ", as it should be pronounced in correct Russian—on the B.B.C. during the grim stages of the Russian war. We stayed here for a while and I looked at the town which was more intact than I had expected. The railway station, engine sheds and goods-yards were rubble and twisted girders, but the main fighting had taken place outside. This " city of the eagle ", as its name implies, had come through the ordeal with head battered but unbowed.

The journey continued over the rolling downs of the provinces of Kursk. We were still in Muscovy with its wooden houses and shingled roofs, pine forests, rough birch scrub and cultivated patches of wheat and rye. The villages did not seem to have suffered much from the war and the population was fairly dense. It was from these central provinces of Muscovy that the manpower of the old Empire was drawn, the manpower which drove back the Tartars and provided the Tsar with conscripts to fight wars with Turkey and Sweden and to harry Napoleon. From these villages also came the adventurous spirits that could not stand the exactions of landlords and the imposts of Emperors and so left to colonise Siberia. That was the Russian method of showing disapproval of their Government. Instead of struggling for the right to form a legal opposition in the country, they went on strike and emigrated into the wilds. Today these central provinces form the rural background of the largest republic of the Union. This, in fact, was the heart of Russia, and as the train rolled along I thought that if you wandered about in this countryside you would really see the true Russia.

Towards evening we approached the borders of the Eastern Ukraine where whitewashed and thatched cottages appeared. The land seemed more fertile, oak and elm woods replaced pine forest, and dried sunflower stalks stood erect in the fields. They had been growing sugar beet and wheat which we saw piled up at the goods-yards, exposed to snow and frost. I wondered if any of it would perish as a result of this treatment. But when I looked

at the wayside stations I was not surprised, because they were all in ruins. The sheds which should have been housing wheat and beet were twisted girders and rubble, and the railway authorities could do no more than accept produce from the collective farmers and dump it in heaps, hoping that trains would come fast enough to take it away to factory and elevator. But evidently they had not come fast enough, for the winter was now here and much was left.

Next day we entered the industrial basin of the Don, the greatest hive of heavy industry in all Russia, which provides her with her largest output of coal, pig iron and steel. What a tragic sight it was as the train ran on past Kremchug. There was a huge metallurgical works, the pride of the Soviet Union, in a state of chaos and disorder, as it was left when the Germans retreated. But I could see that restoration work had started, though it was not likely that there would be any production for some time to come. We passed several blast furnaces. Only one seemed partially to be working. Then we came to the coal-field and I saw some eight or nine mines. At only three was smoke issuing or the winding shaft working. A few coal trains were standing in the stations bound for the industrial areas in the north. But while our train was standing at the station, I watched people with buckets helping themselves to the contents of the trucks. I doubt if these coal trucks reached their destination with more than half the coal originally in them.

I could see all through this industrial part of South Russia that great developments had taken place since I had passed through twenty-seven years before. New blast furnaces and modern metallurgical factories had appeared. The industrial drive of the two Five Year Plans had borne fruit. But I was also struck with the tragedy that the valuable development work, which must have meant so much as a means of raising the standard of living of the Russian people, and of lifting them out of a primitive agrarian and semi-feudal economy, should have been so ruthlessly destroyed. It was as if a juggernaut had passed across the face of Russia.

During the night the train crossed the Don and by morning was passing over the great plain that leads towards the foothills of the

Caucasus and the gateway into Asia. This was the land of the Cossacks of the Kuban. And here and there I could see them at the wayside stations in their long flowing cloaks and beaded fur caps, just as they were when they came out two centuries ago to fight the Turks, hold off the Circassians and the mountain tribes and protect the territories of the Tsar. They were still riding their shaggy little ponies. But they no longer have the privilege of a military caste which they had under the Tsar. My travelling companions told me that they still have their regiments, and I talked to a group of them at one station who had served in a Cossack regiment and had fought on horseback from Mozdok to Berlin. Thus, as in the eighteenth century, after the battle of Kuehnersdorf, the Cossack horses' hoofs had resounded in the streets of Berlin. But now they had a mechanised regiment; moreover, these Cossacks spent a good part of their military training in Central Russia, so that their former exclusiveness has gone.

Another new thing I noticed in this Cossack country were the signs of modern agriculture. Their " stanitsas " or villages had, as in Central Russia and the Ukraine, become collective farms. The signs of this were everywhere. There were large collective granaries in each " stanitsa ", there were heaps of straw lying about in the steppes, thrown out by combine harvesters and still unburnt, there were rows of long stubble left by the combines. All this showed that the Cossack farmers had advanced from the time when I knew them first, when each man had his own plot of land and scratched at it with horses and oxen. There seemed, however, to be no rotation of crops, no doubt because the Kuban steppe is still very fertile, and after corn has been grown twice the land can be rested for a year and come back to corn again without much harm. This is just as it used to be, but I did see here and there indication of " alfafa " grass having been grown, which showed that some were practising rotations.

The weather got colder and colder. A biting north-east wind from Siberia blew across from the salt desert that borders the Caspian Sea and swept down upon our train, as it plodded away over the single-track line that runs some distance to the west of

Prokhladnaya. The thermometer fell to twenty-nine degrees below zero and the air was full of tiny particles of ice that glistened in the sun. The wind howled round our carriage which fortunately had enough fuel to keep the stoves going. You had to be careful to keep moving to avoid frostbite if you left the carriage to walk about at the station. Our engine got into trouble at one place and some time was spent with blowers unfreezing its pipes. In one day the train did only sixty miles, for, in addition to engine trouble, oil trains from Baku and Grozny were coming north on the single track and we had to wait in sidings for them.

We reached Prokhladnaya, an important town on the North Caucasus steppes. There had been much destruction here and heavy fighting, but some of the town had been rebuilt with wooden houses. By the side of the line were many grim and tragic emblems—the graves of Red Army soldiers in long rows. Some had the Soviet Star with hammer and sickle placed over the little mounds. They were probably Communists or Communist sympathisers. Others had the Orthodox cross indicating that many stuck to the old faith. In any case they had all died defending their homeland.

The scene reminded me of Vereschagin's famous picture in the Tretyakov Gallery of the Russo-Turkish war, " All Quiet on the Shipka Pass ", a picture of endless snow and frozen earth providing the last resting place of those who had died for Russia. As I looked on the scene my travelling companion in the compartment with me, a young Georgian, said, " Life was so pleasant in the Caucasus till the Germans attacked us. I wonder if we shall ever have a chance to rebuild our Russia again." I think this remark explains much in the psychology of Russia today. There is a half-conscious, instinctive fear that for the fourth time in a generation they will have their reconstruction plans laid in ruins. So they are looking round and imagining that the evil dream that came true three times will come true again. As some of our people still see Bolsheviks under the bed, so the Russians tend to see Catholic priests and foreign oil concession hunters under their beds.

I had several long talks with my travelling companions, the

Georgians, the Armenians and Tartars from the Caucasus. Two Georgians were particularly interesting. They wanted to know what life was like in England. One of them asked if we had newspapers expressing different opinions on politics and affairs in general. On hearing that this was so, he seemed pleased and even ventured the view that that was as it should be. This and other things I heard made me feel that, the farther I got away from Moscow, there was a somewhat more tolerant attitude of mind, at least among the ordinary folk. I had even found it so among the Communists in the Ukraine and it seemed still more pronounced among the Georgians. The tradition of Georgia, of course, has always been one of contact with the West. In former times it was a very old kingdom that came under the cultural influence of the Byzantine Greeks, and in the nineteenth century a certain amount of French influence crept in. At the same time my Georgian fellow travellers were loyal Russians and immensely proud of their war service in the Red Army. On passing one place in the train one of them pointed out to me with great pride the scene of the action his regiment had fought when it helped to turn the tide of the war in the North Caucasus.

The weather got a little milder. We got out at the stations to forage and buy from the Cossack women a few extras like eggs and jugs of milk. The scenes at the little railside markets were quaint and picturesque. Peasant women with bright shawls were bargaining with passengers from the train. Here and there was a swarthy Tartar in a huge fur cap. A group of Russian children were singing, not for money but just for pleasure, as all Russians in company do sooner or later. Their slightly metallic voices penetrated the frosty air and rose and fell in plaintive little airs ending on high long-drawn notes. This was the voice of Russia, as it has sounded from far-off times down to today. I seemed to notice a similarity between these peasant folk songs and the chants you hear in the Litany and Mass of the Russian Orthodox Church. The historians of the Russian Church have said that the Russians have taken their religion from the Greeks, but they soon began to put their own interpretation upon it. This is also true of their music, and there can be little doubt that Russian Church music

was something that came from the people and reflected their popular songs.

We crossed the swirling stream of the Terek and skirted a range of hills, the outlying spurs of the Caucasus, that mighty wall of mountains just visible in the distance through the winter snow clouds. We were entering the gateway into Asia. It was here that the Cossacks and soldiers of the Tsar had penetrated in the eighteenth century, had laid the foundations of the Eastern Empire and made it the multi-racial State that it is today. In a village by the line I saw for the first time on this journey a Mohammedan mosque. We were among the Ossetinians and this was the autonomous region of Northern Ossetinia and Kabardinia. A little farther on we came into what had been the land of the Ingush, mountain tribesmen whose territory extends into the plains. But many of them had been shifted farther east by order of the Government, for some of them were fifth columnists during the war.[1] There was much waste land now and large ranches appeared where Tartar herdsmen guarded their black-and-dun cattle, sheep and goats. Great reed beds appeared by the rivers and streams, and at the wayside stations Ossetinian girls offered you fresh wild duck and teal.

We reached Beslan and here for the first time since leaving Moscow (one thousand two hundred miles away) I saw a railway station that was not in ruins. At last we had arrived at a place which the war had not reached; the Germans were held before they reached there. Once more I heard the bell announce the arrival and departure of a train, as it used to do. Once more I could see the comfortable Russian railway stations after five days through a land of destroyed railways and towns.

After Beslan we passed through stony hills and valleys in the foothills of the Caucasus. The Ingush and Chechens who lived in the villages are Mohammedans and each village has its mosque.

[1] This is not the first time there has been trouble with the Ingush. In the wars with Turkey during the nineteenth century the Russians were always able to rely on the Ossetinians, some of whom had become Orthodox Christians. But they never could rely on the Ingush, partly no doubt because they were all Mohammedan and sympathised with the Turks and partly because they were unruly mountain people who took unkindly to any control. It seems that their old instinct to co-operate with the invaders of Russia came out in the last war.

I noticed that most of them had some local industry, such as a creamery or a leather factory and there were new orchards of plum, apricot and almond. The houses, too, seemed better than the miserable mud hovels that I remembered. There had been material improvements that were especially visible now that we had arrived at a point which the tide of war had not reached. As evening approached, the land fell gradually down to the Caspian Sea, whose limpid waters and barren shores we could just see as darkness came on. We were now over sixty feet below sea level and the climate was quite mild and pleasant compared to the Arctic rigours of the Cossack steppes we had passed. At the Derbend Gates the foothills of the Caucasus come down to the sea; the invaders of Europe from Asia have in times past built their castles there. We entered the Azerbaijan Tartar Republic, Russia in Asia, as our train at last pulled up at the platform at Baku.

CHAPTER XIV

ASIATIC RUSSIA REVISITED

I WAS NOW in Asiatic Russia where the native population is basically non-Russian. This was Soviet Azerbaijan, a republic of three million people federated to the U.S.S.R. I had been here last in 1911, when returning from a journey in Central Asia. In those days it was indeed the unchanging East. What should I find here today?

First, who are the Azerbaijan Tartars that inhabit this part of the Eastern Trans-Caucasus, this large territory stretching inland from the western shores of the Caspian Sea? Their racial origin is obscure, but culturally they are a mixture of two strains which have had at different times great influence on Central and Western Asia—the Turkish and the Persian civilisations. At one time they must have been under Persian influence. Their dress is Persian and so is their native art. In religion also they are Shiah Moslems. But they speak a dialect of Turkish, known as Turki, which probably came to them as the result of the Mongol and Turkish invasions of the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries and with the setting up of the Ilkhan dynasty by the descendants of Hulagu Khan.

In 1911 I remember that all the Tartar women in Azerbaijan were strictly veiled and ninety per cent of the population were illiterate. The power of the Mohammedan Mullahs over the people was immense and their influence conservative, not to say definitely reactionary.

Throughout all this part of Central Asia, Islam, while originally a great liberating force, freeing the people from superstition and idolatry, seems to have become completely bogged down into inactivity in later centuries. Chastity was enforced upon women but they were also reduced to domestic drudges. Though no one

can say that Moslem women have not used their influence on their menfolk in the past, this has not been as a result of a wide education. The only schools I remember in Baku in 1911 were "Maddressehs", attached to mosques, where Tartar youths learned the Koran and prepared to become Mullahs. The whole Civil Service and most of the business offices were run by Russians and Armenians.

As in the Ukraine, the October Revolution resulted in chaos in the Caucasus for some years. For a time the whole territory broke away from Russia and became semi-independent, but by 1921 the influence of the great people in the north made itself felt again. It seemed as if the Caucasus could not live without Russia. Originally Peter the Great had brought Russian forces into a part of Azerbaijan and later the Empress Catherine had annexed that part to the Empire in order to avoid constant raids and disorders on the frontiers, as the Shah's Government was so weak. This was all part of the great eastward move of the Russians which began under Ivan the Terrible and resulted in breaking the Tartar hegemony over Russia and finally in the creation of a multi-racial Empire of Slavs and Tartars united in equal citizenship. And, indeed, I always noted the extreme racial tolerance of the Russians and how in Tsarist days Russian and Tartar were always treated alike by the Government. There was no racial discrimination even in old Russia. There was only a corrupt and incompetent bureaucracy which neglected both peoples equally, so when the October Revolution came the new ideas of economic liberty began to spread among the Tartars as well. Azerbaijan branches of the Communist Party were formed and soon the Russians were back again in the Caucasus—a Red regime this time, which gave greater opportunity than had ever been the case before for men and women to raise their material standards of life.

Much initiative has been left to the local people. There is an Azerbaijan Government which controls education, culture, light industry and, in part, agriculture; and the material advancement of the Tartars over the last thirty-five years has to be seen to be believed. Of course, the people have never known political freedom as we know it in the West; there is no free play of different

schools of political thought. In the far-off days they were oppressed by the satraps of the Shah of Persia. Since the middle of the eighteenth century they were subjects of the Tsar and politically (as long as they kept quiet) they were left very much to themselves, and were not even called to serve in the Russian Army. On the other hand, nothing was done to raise their material way of life or to educate them. Today they serve in the Red Army, and an Azerbaijan division fought with distinction in the North Caucasus; but the difference that I noticed now as compared with thirty-five years ago was that the Central Government in Moscow really bothered about the welfare of these people and this had produced great results. I will let my experience in the Baku of today tell its story.

On my arrival in Baku I was met by an official of the Azerbaijan Foreign Office and escorted to an Intourist hotel where I was comfortably housed. A programme of visits was arranged but I also found myself quite free to go about as I liked. So on my first morning I wandered off by myself into the bazaar on the hillside behind the old Persian fort, " Devuchy Bashnya ", and the eleventh-century mosque, " Mechet Sinni Kale ". In these narrow streets and dark booths I had years ago spent hours bargaining with swarthy wide-eyed Persian merchants for carpets and little curios, and here I had got my martin fur coat (which I still have) for an equivalent of something like three pounds. Here I had tasted the delicious dried fruits of the East and sipped Turkish coffee on a divan. Here I had heard native musicians play on the " Tar " and sing the songs that Timur and Djenghiz Khan must have heard. But today the bazaar was gone. The narrow streets were there but the dark booths were all boarded up. Only a few families were living in upper stories and some Tartar children still played about in the dirty streets. Otherwise it was deserted. I felt dejected, for here was a piece of the picturesque East gone. One of the mosques that I remembered was there, but shut, and the school beside it closed. Not a sound broke the silence except the howl of a stray pariah dog.

I moved on into one of the wide streets of modern Baku beyond the old fortress hill. The first thing that struck my eye was a

large building on which was written the word " Gostorg " in large Russian letters with the native word inscribed below. Now I could see what had happened to my old bazaar. The Soviets had nationalised and municipalised a part of the trade in food, domestic goods and clothing; here was, as I had seen in Moscow, Leningrad, and Kiev, the big State trading store run under the auspices of the Azerbaijan autonomous Government. Another store farther down the street was run by the municipality of Baku. Inside you could satisfy all the needs of the household by presenting coupons. But, as in other parts of Russia, there were stores which supplied goods without coupons at free market prices; and there seemed to be quite a large number who earned enough money to shop there, judging by the way it was patronised by Russian and Tartar workers from the oilfields, shipyards and Government offices. Here the races of the East and West were mixed and I even discovered later in conversations that intermarriage between Russians and Tartars is taking place—a thing that was formerly hardly known because of the opposition to this by both the Orthodox Church and the Mohammedan hierarchy.

From here I went for a stroll down by the side of the sea towards the shipyards and soon came upon an open market like the ones I had been to visit outside Moscow. Here in an open square Tartar peasants were selling their produce to the townsfolk of Baku while in the streets near by Tartar craftsmen were making shoes, moulding hardware and mending clothes. Here was a relic of the bazaar on the hill that I had missed, still with much of its picturesqueness but today playing nothing like the role in the economy of the people that it did in former times. The unrestricted law of supply-and-demand has been replaced by a social service. But again a safety valve is left to the people to engage in bargaining and individual trading in certain surplus goods. In this respect Azerbaijan follows the pattern of the rest of Russia.

What struck me most after leaving Soviet Azerbaijan and entering Persia was the apparent abundance of everything in the latter country. Shops and bazaars were laden with luscious fruits and produce of every kind from farm and garden, and even a certain amount of household goods. Throughout all Russia, on

the other hand, shops were often half full and things were not easy to come by, but it was possible for everyone to get something. The moment I left Russia I found abundance everywhere for those who had large purses. For the rest there was little, and so I consoled myself for the loss of my old bazaar on the hill with the thought that Russia had gone the way of greater social justice.

The afternoon of my first day in Baku I was taken by a Foreign Office official to visit educational and industrial establishments. I first went to the Academy of Science which is a centre for organising applied sciences in the Azerbaijan Republic, such as geological research in oil resources, chemical research in oil distillation, research in building materials, health and medicine. There were seventeen heads of departments, and of these twelve were Azerbaijan Tartars and the remaining five Russians and Armenians. The President of the Academy was an Azerbaijan medical man of some eminence. I went on to the Naphtha Research Institute, the head of which was a Tartar chemist. It had a teaching department where a large number of students were receiving technical courses to fit them for careers in the oil industry. Most of the students were native Caucasians of all kinds. I then visited the University and found that more than half the lecturers were Tartars. In Government offices I found that seventy-five per cent of the junior Civil Service were Azerbaijan Tartars who had received their education, primary and secondary, in the Caucasus. The higher posts of the Civil Service were filled up to about fifty per cent by natives who had studied in the Universities of Baku and Tiflis. But many had completed their training in Moscow, Leningrad and Kiev. The change that had taken place was remarkable, far more so than in other parts of Russia where I had been; for here the leeway to be made up in education and culture generally was greater than in European Russia, and so it was naturally more noticeable. There can be no doubt that the October Revolution let loose the floodgates of progress in the Moslem areas of the Caucasus in all matters relating to education and the material advancement of the people.

I was taken to visit the great Baku oilfields. Each area along the Caspian Sea had its own oil trust named after some prominent

Soviet statesman. I went through a forest of derricks in a wilderness of mud and oil; about the most soul-destroying scene imaginable. But here were great technical improvements. I remember when the oil was raised laboriously by plungers hauled up from the depths and then released. Today automatic pumps raise the oil. New bore holes were being drilled, some out in the Caspian, but from all I could gather the output of the oilfields had fallen heavily during the war. I could get no figures but, judging by what I read in the local Azerbaijan papers, it was clear that every effort was being made to raise output and encourage "socialist competition" between the oilfields. Lack of drilling machinery and spare parts for pumps appeared to be largely the cause of output difficulties. On the other hand, there was no shortage of oil in the Caucasus. Indeed, geologists with whom I talked in Baku assured me that the oil resources in the Oligocene deposits of the central Caucasus are immense and untapped. The demands of Russia for oil concessions in Persia are clearly not due to prospective shortage round the Caspian but to a very natural desire to prevent foreign companies having an economic foothold right on Russia's doorstep.

I found that great social improvements had taken place in the Baku oilfields since I was there last. A few hovels could still be seen here and there, but in the main the workers were living in magnificent housing estates, surrounded by irrigated gardens, shrubberies and rows of poplars. Inside one of these oases it was possible to forget the existence of the ghastly wilderness of oil pools, barren sand and stone outside. New estates were being built, and I saw a party of building workers engaged in putting up new flats. But, as elsewhere in Russia, it seemed that it required three men for a job which would require one with us. Each oil trust had a "Hall of Culture" where the oil workers and their families came for daily concerts, plays and entertainments, sometimes homemade. Here also was a list of Stakhanovite workers who had exceeded the average daily output. I noticed a preponderance of Russian names on the list, although I gathered that the majority of workers were Tartars. It was clear that the people from the north were the more energetic.

Owing to transport difficulties and lack of time, I was not able to visit any of the larger collective farms of Azerbaijan where so-called " technical crops ", like cotton, tobacco and linseed, were grown. I saw some of the smaller collective farms near Baku which were growing vegetables for the local markets in the oil fields and I had a long talk with the agricultural experts of the Azerbaijan Government and saw the very good agricultural museum in Baku. I found that collectivisation of agriculture was put into effect throughout the Caucasus some years later than in European Russia. The principle adopted, however, was the same, and the Tartar peasants seem to have taken to it after some hesitation and even opposition. As in European Russia, I found they all had their own holdings, but I felt that the struggle to get the peasants to put their best efforts into the collectively farmed land, and not neglect it in favour of their private holdings, was greater here than in European Russia. It was not easy to get good returns for " technical crops " on the larger collective farms of Azerbaijan because of the relative backwardness of the Tartars. Progress is being made, but I had only to look at the technical agricultural Press to see that education of the peasant has some way to go yet. In fact, the Press generally was full of exhortation to improvement and even of admonition to those who were thought not to be pulling their weight.

I found there were considerable scientific problems to solve on the land in Azerbaijan, such as avoiding saline conditions after irrigation on some of the steppes. A great hydro-electric power scheme at Mingechaursk, which involved the harnessing of the waters of the Kura, was being planned. When it is undertaken it will be on a scale almost equal to the Tennessee Valley scheme. Then I found that they had been crossing native Azerbaijan sheep with the merinos, apparently with some success, and in one interesting experiment they had crossed the native Karabagh sheep with the wild mountain sheep of Central Asia, the *Ovis Poli*. In this way they had apparently secured a cross which was fertile, but they were not using it in Azerbaijan because it did not do well there. It was being used instead in Kirghizistan across the Caspian where the Kirghiz Tartars live at fairly high altitudes.

In general it can be said that the October Revolution has given the Russians in Asia an opportunity to get ahead with all kinds of education and scientific research and they are doing many interesting things. They make big propaganda of it, and much of it will not be worth a lot, but some of it will.

The Russians have also done excellent work coping with the problems of poverty among the nomad population of Azerbaijan and the Caucasus generally. The problem of restless nomads is not, however, so serious as in the neighbouring countries of Persia and Iraq, in that there are only about fifty thousand nomads in the Trans-Caucasus, mostly Kurds in the Karabagh and parts of the Armenian republic. The Soviet authorities have dealt with the problem by laying it down that the nomads must spend a portion of the year growing subsistence crops in order that they shall not depend only on flocks and herds. But they have not just left it at that. The Azerbaijan and Armenian Governments have carried out irrigation works to provide the nomads with water, and have supplied experts to teach them to grow certain green crops with improved seed. The result has been a general improvement in the standard of life, particularly with the Khurds. This is quite different to the measures adopted by the Turkish, Iraq and Persian Governments in dealing with their Khurds. They have regarded it as a military problem and have merely forbidden migration, thereby depriving these nomads of their summer pastures without enabling them to raise food from other sources. The result in South Persia was widespread famine among the tribes, and when the Shah was deposed the old conditions returned once more which, though they did not make for internal peace, at least prevented starvation.

While I was in Russia I heard that a certain Khurdish chief who had given trouble to the Iraq Government had fled to the Caucasus and had been received there by the authorities. This is an indication of the delicate political situation that may arise if Russia becomes, as she may quite easily do, the moral protector of the Khurds. But if this happens the Persian and Iraq Governments will largely have themselves to blame, for the Russians have shown in practice how economic development and education

is the only method of dealing with restless and poverty-stricken nomads or semi-nomads. It is true, of course, that the problem is more difficult in Persia and Iraq, because the nomad population there is larger than in the Caucasus, and tribal chiefs with a vested interest in brigandage are strongly entrenched. But that was once the case in the Caucasus, Trans-Caspian region and in Turkmenistan, and the Russians have solved the problem there.

I have up to now dealt with the material side of the renaissance which has come to Asiatic Russia in general and to the Eastern Caucasus in particular. Has there been a similar renaissance in culture and the art? As far as literature and drama was concerned, a cultural renaissance in Soviet Azerbaijan was being built up round the twelfth-century poet and philosopher, Nizami Djanji. A fine museum had been built in his honour, full of historical relics of this part of the Caucasus, but when I began to look closer I could see that there was nothing very original about it. Thus the architecture of Azerbaijan in the past was typical of what one would see anywhere in Persia or Iraq.

The carpets were of the kind to be seen in Samarkand or Bokhara, the illuminated books and pictures were inspired from Arab sources. In other words, the culture of the Moslem Caucasus was borrowed from Persia and Arabia at the time of their greatness. This, however, was vigorously denied by my guides who claimed that Azerbaijan art had nothing in common with anything else, that the great poet Nizami wrote nothing in Persian or Arabic but only in Azerbaijani, which, they said, had nothing in common with Turkish. The people of Azerbaijan in fact had not even any racial affinities with the Persians. I soon became aware that they were trying a little political propaganda on me, but I quickly told my guides to drop it, because it was making no impression. In the libraries I got hold of Russian translations of Nizami's plays and poems and saw that they were largely taken from Persian and Arab legends of the Middle Ages. I confirmed this later when I saw these plays acted in Baku. Moreover, one of his big poetic works was a lyric on Alexander the Great and showed that his art was not confined to a narrow nationalism but was broad and human. The truth is that Azerbaijan Communists, possibly

without any promptings from Moscow, have been running a strong anti-foreign policy which goes so far as perverting the local art and drama to their purpose.

In spite of this, however, native Azerbaijan art and letters have made enormous strides in recent years. The clumsy Arabic letters, which were in use when I was in Baku years ago, have been discarded. Instead of giving them the Latin alphabet (as the Turks have given their people), or the Russian alphabet, it has been arranged that they shall use the ancient Slavonic or Kyrillic letters for modern Azerbaijan literature. This alphabet seemed to provide all the sounds needed for this Turki language. I then visited the musical conservatoire where the director, Professor Hadjibekov, is a native Azerbaijani. He had developed native music and brought it into line with European, having himself studied abroad. I found that he had succeeded in producing modern operas out of librettos from Persian and Arabic legends, the most popular of these being *Laylee y Majnun*, an Arabic *Romeo and Juliet*. In these operas he has combined the European with the native musical instruments, the " Tar " and " Kermonshah," the first a kind of mandoline and the second a native violin. I attended a performance at the Baku opera of *Laylee y Majnun* and found the music most impressive, being a mixture of European and Asiatic and something quite new in the musical world. Actually native Azerbaijan music is very highly developed. I found that books had been published about it, and I obtained some. It has much more complicated scales than we have in European music and there are four keys, not just major and minor as with us. To the European ear it sounds strange, till you realise after a while that its different shades of sound are much finer than ours and indicate a very ancient civilisation. Russian composers come down to Baku to hear it and, indeed, great encouragement is given to Azerbaijan musicians by the Russians.

In general I found that musical and dramatic activity was being kept fairly free from politics. Only in one instance did I observe any attempt to introduce it. That was in a modern opera called *Karoglu*. The music and singing was excellent, but the subject a little naïve. A wicked Khan oppresses his peasants who rise up

against him and in the revolt are joined by workers and peasants from Georgia and Armenia. The wicked Khan is duly " liquidated " and everyone lives happily ever afterwards. The whole thing smelt too much of the " party line ".

A visit to the theatre or opera in Baku is most instructive. One day it would be a native Azerbaijan piece and next day a Russian piece. Russian classics would alternate with native. At the opera two-thirds of the audience were natives and one-third Russian when the works of Nizami were being played, and the other way round with Pushkin. The scenes between the acts during the promenade were a colourful mixture of Asiatic and European faces and costumes. It was clear that a wonderful cultural mingling of the two peoples was going on. The native art was not being swamped by the Russian. Indeed it was fully holding its own and was being encouraged by the Russians. There was, in fact, complete tolerance between the two peoples. After all I saw in Baku I could only conclude that the October Revolution had given colossal encouragement to native culture in the Caucasus and in Azerbaijan in particular and that the Russians were proving once more their amazing capacity to live co-operatively with Asiatic people without absorbing them, indeed both mutually benefiting by each other.

So the old Azerbaijan culture with its tradition of Islam was still very much alive. The cult of modern materialism did not reign supreme and the spiritual appeal of the old religion still had important adherents. All that is best in Islam seems to have been preserved and all that is not so good, particularly the subjection of women, has gone. I found that a conference of Shia Moslems from the Caucasus and Turkestan had met in Baku shortly before I arrived there. One Friday, during the period of Muharram, I attended a prayer meeting in one of the Baku mosques. The place was packed. Afterwards I spoke with the Mullah and went to visit his maddrasseh or religious school. As far as I could estimate about one-third of the Moslem population of Baku were regularly going to mosques, that is, about the same proportion as with Christians in European Russia. The Soviet regime encourages pilgrimages to Mecca. My conversation with Mullahs

in Baku gave me the impression that they much appreciated the consideration which the Soviet regime gave to their religious community.

As my time to leave Baku, and Russia, drew nearer I became more convinced than ever that Russian prestige in the Middle East is bound to grow if only because of the great material and cultural benefits which the Soviet regime has brought to the Asiatic provinces of the Union. If the Governments of Persia and Iraq are afraid of Soviet Russia, it is only because they have not put their houses in order and fear disruptive forces at home which are attracted by the progress across their frontiers in Asiatic Russia. And just as Russian policy on her western borders aims at preventing neighbouring States from becoming centres of disturbance and intrigue against her so on her southern and Asiatic borders she is working for similar ends. If we do not want Russian influence to advance over the Middle East we must encourage material and cultural progress in Persia, Turkey and the Arab countries. For a new civilisation is springing up in the Asiatic Republics of the Soviet Union, a mingling of all that is best in the ancient world of Islam with the new and vigorous civilisation of the Eastern Slavonic world. It is only just beginning to take shape and its maturer forms are not yet fully apparent. Thirty years ago I saw a stagnant civilisation in Asiatic Russia. Now I see something that is healthy, vigorous and growing.

It was with these thoughts that I sat in the aeroplane that took me from Baku to Persia. I looked down upon the blue and almost still waters of the Caspian Sea, and back on the vanishing shores of the Soviet Union; and reflected that I had just spent some of the most exhilarating weeks of my life.

AND SO WHAT?

IN SUMMARISING my impressions I was principally struck by the persistence of the Russian belief that the individual citizen is less important than the community as a whole. There is not that fine balance between the citizen and the commonwealth to which the Anglo-Saxon world aspires and in part at least attains; whenever there is any conflict between the two, individual rights take a back seat. But there is nothing new in this. In the sixteenth century the Russian people watched with stupefaction as Ivan the Terrible wiped out the " boyars " in the interests of strong central government. A century later thousands of men perished in the fever swamps of the Neva in order that St. Petersburg should be built. More recently thousands disappeared in the " purges " of the thirties in order that the Soviet regime should be saved, and in the process the innocents suffered with the guilty. Even before the German invasion, hundreds of thousands of persons were uprooted from Poland and the Western Ukraine and dumped in remote parts of Russia where many of them died. Throughout Russian history, in fact, human life has been cheap, for the legacy of Roman law, the traditions of Western Christianity, and the value set on personality, which was confirmed and extended by the Reformation, was never felt in the Eastern Slav world. The Russian Orthodox Church has a tradition of humanism based on the New Testament which is second to none in Christendom, but the Mongol invasion, the great schism of the seventeenth century and the subordination of Church to State in the eighteenth century paved the way for a strongly centralised secular power, and the outlook on life referred to above. Moreover, the vastness of Russia and the need to hold her territories together has still further completed the process. In this respect the October Revolution has brought no change. *Plus ca change*. . . .

In other ways, too, there has been little change. Time is still of no great account in Russia. The people are slow workers and

not so efficient as in the West, but they have a great capacity for working in groups in co-operative enterprises.

A great bureaucracy is an integral part of Russia today, as it formerly was. It is cumbersome but it works and gets things done after a fashion. It is still very inefficient in the lower levels, but at the higher levels it is far more efficient than it used to be. Its chief weakness is still that it tends to fail to delegate authority.

The Russian attitude to foreigners has not changed much. The initial reaction of a Russian to a stranger is one of suspicion and a desire to hide his thoughts and intentions until he knows more about him. This is the result of Russia's two hundred years' subjection to the Tartars in the Middle Ages. If the foreigner is patient, this suspicion gradually disappears and then there is no people with whom it is easier to be friendly than the Russians. But you have got to get over the initial stage of suspicion. All this to some extent explains Russia's behaviour at international conferences.

In another respect, too, the Russians are very much the same. They dislike compromise and are always searching for some complete and perfect solution of whatever problem they are considering. That is why they love to draw up the most wonderful plans for developing their country, although it may be years before they can be accomplished. It was just the same even in Tsarist Russia. They are not interested in slow growth by stages. They love to argue first principles, and there is always a strong undercurrent of desire to show the world that Russia has the secret of salvation, and that she has been called to emancipate mankind. In the sixteenth century Moscow regarded herself as the Third Rome and the home of the only true Christianity. Today the Communist Party is the church which has the truth, and its mission is to emancipate the workers of the world.

I don't want to suggest that there have not been sweeping changes. There have, but they have been changes more of method and approach. For instance, in Tsarist days there were restrictions everywhere but in practice it was not difficult to get round them, for the regime was inefficient. Today life is freer in theory, but the regime being more efficient, regulations are enforced and largely obeyed. In the old days there was a censorship, but it was

not very effective and acted in fits and starts; in the decline of Tsarism there was no attempt to guide opinion. Today opinion is controlled by Press and wireless.

The greatest change of all, however, is in the material condition of the people. This is much better than it used to be in the sense that everyone now gets a chance of a good education, especially a technical one, and a fair share of whatever the national income is. If that share is not as large as it might be, and if the standard of life in Russia is below that of Western Europe and far lower than America, that is largely because of the material destruction from three foreign wars that Russia has suffered over the last thirty years. The change for the better is most particularly noticeable in the villages. I got the very best impression both from the Muscovite and Ukrainian villages that I visited. The people, in spite of the after-effects of the war, were better fed than in Tsarist days and had an air of hopefulness about them, unknown then.

When I first knew Russia she was not a democracy. Now she is; not our type of political democracy but an economic one in which the under-dog gets what is going, even though that may not be a lot by our standards. The talk about a privileged class in Russia is much overdone. Certain individuals who give special service to the State do get extra rewards. But there is no privileged class as there used to be in old Russia, or, for that matter, as there still is in many parts of Western Europe and America.

Foreign policy has not changed fundamentally but its instruments are in some respects different. What is the same is that diplomatic methods are indirect and the basic aim is security for Russia and the maintenance of stable conditions in the bordering States. As in the fifties of last century after the Crimean War, Russia wanted to upset the settlement that prevented her from having any control over the entrance and exit of the Black Sea, so today she wants the same thing. She wanted friendly Balkan and Danubian States and she wants them today. But her methods have changed. In the nineteenth century she would stage some incident on the Afghan frontier or in the Balkans in order to raise the question of the Straits. Today she uses Communist Parties in various parts of the world as pressure groups in the

hope of securing a more favourable attitude on the part of Western Europe and America for Russian claims.

The old Russia was an autocracy. The present one is politically totalitarian, and power is concentrated in a small group of able men. But the regime has nothing in common with Nazism. Russia's relations with the people of Asia have always been the converse of racial domination. The Russians have no racial feelings. Moreover, in Asia territorial expansion has, in the past, only taken place where the stronger Russian system had come in contact with that of weak Asiatic States. And in future the expansion of the Russian political system will only take place if neighbouring systems prove weak internally. If Western democracies can set up stable regimes in their zones of Germany, there will be no expansion there. In Asia, if the national movements in Persia, Turkey and the Arab countries prove capable of putting up efficient governments, Russia will not expand beyond her present frontiers.

In the last analysis I came to the conclusion that economically there has been great change but politically little in Russia as a result of the October Revolution. The tide of Russian history ebbs and flows. The last Revolution set Russia along the road of constructing a modern twentieth-century State on the foundation of a culture and tradition which had grown up among the Eastern Slavs during the last six hundred years. It is still too soon to say what kind of system will ultimately result, for there seems to be a mingling going on of much that was good in old Russia together with some new ideas from the West. The new faith in dialectic materialism is being tempered by the humanism of the Orthodox Church which has revived its fortunes. Thus old and new are competing on somewhat unequal terms, but competing they are. Once again Russia has passed through a convulsion, and, avidly adopting an idea which the rest of the world has never taken to, is now proceeding to work it up into something peculiarly her own.

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