

THE TRAGEDY OF RUSSIA

Impressions

from a Brief Visit

by

WILL DURANT

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TO THE
COMMUNISTS OF AMERICA

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PREFACE

I should like to warn the reader that this book is based upon a very brief visit to Russia in the summer of 1932. Whatever value the book may have will depend upon the background of judgment, not upon the area of observation. To the reader who wishes a more detailed presentation of the evidence I should warmly recommend Elisha Friedman's *Russia in Transition*. Most of the material here printed has appeared in a series of articles published by the *Saturday Evening Post*, to whose courteous editors acknowledgment is hereby made. Chapter IV, on "The Religious Revolution in Russia," has not been published before.

The views expressed in this book will be unavoidably unpopular with most critics, whose natural liberalism and sympathetic interest in new experiments will be offended by this apparent betrayal of the liberal cause. I can only ask them to remember that liberalism may be defined as fidelity to freedom.

WILL DURANT

HOLY RUSSIA

Written at the time of the Archangel Expedition, 1918.



Holy Russia,

There was never in history deed more saintly and
beautiful than yours,
Nor in history deed more dastardly and unclean than
the strangling of you by a thousand wolves,
The strangling of even your women, who are the
glory of the world,
And of your children, whose eyes have seen the
portals of the kingdom.



Holy Russia,

We too are your sons, though you see us not;
Sons of your spirit, by the seeds that your saints and
your geniuses have scattered over the earth;
The fire which you have kindled leaps across conti-
nents and oceans, and sings our souls;
We know that if you die we die, all but the self-
seeking flesh of us;
We know that your blood is spilt for us, for your
children and lovers everywhere;
And our shame is unspeakable that we are yet helpless
to help you.

But not any victory of arms or wealth could match
the glory you have won;
For now because of you we know that men can be
boundlessly noble,
And that love can be limitless.



Holy Russia,
Forgive us that we have not yet come to you,
Or that we have not yet stayed the hands that
would stifle you.
Perhaps we shall be stronger soon, and not so care-
fully patient;
Perhaps we shall be brave enough to bear testimony
that the truth is in you,
And that the future is the fruit of your blood and
your loins;
Perhaps we shall at last scatter the thieves that cast-
lots for your raiment;
Perhaps—O God that it may be!—we shall take you
down in time from your cross,
And heal your wounds with the love of the world,
O gentle Christ of the Nations!

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CHAPTER ONE

THE ROAD TO MOSCOW

I. HOPEFUL ENTRY

AT Vancouver, B. C., on July 7th, 1932, in a public discussion before an audience of some two thousand people, I was asked for my opinion of the Communist experiment in Russia. I answered: "I am afraid that Communism cannot succeed, but I hope to God it does." It was in that mood that I sailed from Seattle two days later on a pilgrimage to Moscow, shrine of the intellectuals of the world.

I was sympathetic with communism because I had seen in my own country the breakdown of the most successful individualist economy in history. Never before had any system of production created wealth so rapidly, or spread it so widely, transforming a wilderness, in the space of a century, into a material Utopia, and coming within sight, for a time, of abolishing poverty among a hundred million people. But the seeds of disaster seemed fatally inherent in that system. For the science and invention which it nourished increased the power of the people to produce faster than their power, under the system, to consume; and while this brought periodic stoppages of production at home, it forced the system into such

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competition for foreign markets as seemed destined to lead to a succession of imperialist wars, in which victory would be almost as costly as defeat, and defeat would be certain in the end. Individualism, the absence of central control over economic life, had made us in the nineteenth century, and threatened to break us in the twentieth. All the Western world was in chaos: dismembered with nationalism, congested with tariffs, overwhelmed with unemployment, threatened with war and decay.

But in Russia, we had been told, these evils had been avoided, these problems had been solved. In that happy land there was no unemployment whatever, no narrow nationalism, no imperialism, no desire for war, no exploitation of man by man, no tariff hindering the flow of goods over one-sixth of the world. Poverty existed there, but it was shared equally by all, accepted willingly by a liberated people in the heroic resolve to build a self-contained industrial basis for military security and an equitably distributed wealth. There all men were brothers, and all women were as free as men. Soon no poverty would remain there, no arduous toil, no despotism, finally no state; and all the world, weary of nationalist bitterness and industrial exploitation, would follow Russia into communism, and make at last the Utopia dreamed of by the unhappy generations of mankind. Could any soul be so dead as not to thrill

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with sympathy for this noblest experiment of all?

My brief acquaintance with history made me doubt if Russia could succeed. If the past had any light to shed upon the future, the strong and clever would sooner or later use the simple and weak there as everywhere, and classes would rise again out of the natural inequality of men. But I prayed that I might be wrong; and I vowed to keep my mind open to every hope, my encouragement ready for every ideal. Nothing could be more beautiful than this effort of men to work together, not to acquire but to contribute. In a sense Russia was trying to solve not merely the economic problem, but the greatest problem of all—to give the individual life a value and significance not defeatable by death, to make that individual life a part of the War of Liberation against oppression, poverty and ignorance. Perhaps, if this experiment failed, the last barrier against modern pessimism and cynicism would be down, and a riot of epicureanism, enfeebling body and soul, would bring our civilization to an end. I trusted that I might return to America and report to a lost and bewildered people that Russia had found the way.

II. IN SIBERIA

We passed quickly through Japan, for we had seen enough of its beauty and its poverty two years be-

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fore. Proud soldiers examined our passports suspiciously at every step, finding it hard to forgive us for being Americans, and harder still to understand why we should want to go to Russia. Overnight to Fusan; a day in a clean express across Korea's sunny fields; overnight into Mukden, and thence to Changchun; here already were Russian faces, and Russian guards on the Chinese Eastern train. At Harbin, the next morning, we found a strange prosperity: the calm Chinese went about their business without visible concern over the Japanese occupation; and the "White" Russians, refugees from communism, had captured enough of the fur trade to be well-dressed, comfortable, and mannerly, though still dreaming of a Restoration and a triumphant return.

Then across Manchuria, with Russian personnel and Chinese soldiers on the train, and Japanese troops pacing the platform of every station on the way. At Tsitsihar floods held us back throughout the night, and we slept fitfully in our berths under the heaviest rain we had ever experienced, while bandits, unknown to us, besieged our train until, discouraged by locked doors and windows and armed guards, they changed their minds and retreated into the woods. At Manchuli the customs agents of the Soviets examined our baggage without fuss, and registered our checks and bills without discourtesy or delay. We boarded the Trans-Siberian Express, and slowly

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moved out of Manchuria into Asiatic Russia. We were happy, and joined cordially with Russian passengers in singing communist songs. At last, after crossing half the planet, we were in the Earthly Paradise.

We felt at once the immensity of this land of the Soviets, three times as vast as our United States. The train would take six days from Manchuli to Moscow, and yet it would travel at a fair rate of speed. These great distances were a disadvantage now, in the age of steam; but soon the airplane would come and shorten these spaces into the quickest route—first for passengers and then for goods—between western Europe and the awakening East. Far back in the Middle Ages Russia had prospered as part of the land route to the Indies and Cathay; the improvement of navigation and the discovery of America had left Russia stagnant, off the new lines of trade; but the conquest of the air might make her again the half-way house between Europe and Asia, and cause her cities to flourish like the busy ports of Renaissance Italy, enriched like these with the commerce of Europe with the East. Already at Irkutsk we could hear above us the hum of the giant plane that thrice a week flies to Moscow in a day and a half, while the train labors to cover the same distance in five days. Part of the League of Nations Manchurian Commission traveled from Harbin to Paris by the Trans-

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Siberian, and took ten days; the rest came by water, and took six weeks.

This Siberian Leviathan, that sprawls like a great bear across the back of Asia, is still an untilled and sparsely settled continent, caught between ice-caps and deserts, and suffering winters eight to ten months long—doubtless it will soon fill up at the present rate of deportations. The villages are hamlets a hundred miles apart. We did not have to leave the train to explore them, for all their population flocked to the depot to greet our caravan, which was almost the only proof they had of an objective world. Half of them were unprepossessing Mongol types, with sharp, slant eyes that seemed to be stalking prey; we were not quite comfortable as we walked the platform among them, and hoped that they had heard of the Brotherhood of Man. Perhaps that is what they hoped of us. The men stared at us stolidly, while the women, even more shabbily dressed than the men, peddled dietetic curiosities among the passengers. A barefoot boy with coat of tan—or was it the good earth?—tried to sell us some cucumbers; we refused them, but tendered him a dime as a peace-offering. He took it furtively, and was going off happily, when the *provodnik*—half porter and half trainman on our car—commanded him to return it, and gave us to understand that the citizens of Russia do not accept gratuities. We heard him gladly until we ob-

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served with what decisiveness he accepted a dollar from us when we left his train.

It was a good train, as Russian transportation goes; far better, if I may trust my memory, than the trains that jerked me through Russia in 1912. It made a dozen stops a day, of ten or twenty minutes each, and yet it averaged thirty miles an hour. For the most part it was composed of third-class cars, frail boxes on whose wooden benches a motley mass of impoverished adults and children crowded good-naturedly. A few of the cars were second-class, divided like ours into compartments, but ascetically "hard" and bare. To these sleeping compartments, whether of the first- or second-class, men and women were assigned without sex discrimination; a woman here had equal rights with a male to share a strange man's *coupé*. No fuss was made about it; and though it may play some part in the highest birth-rate in the world, it was an original device for mitigating the tedium of travel. Our own car was a standard *wagon-lit*, or "bed-wagon," equipped with everything but screens and cleanliness. The berths were narrow, but good enough. The sheets were clean—at the beginning; but they had to serve us throughout our four-day trip, and soon they were half black with the dust of a thousand Siberian *vyersts*.

The dining-car was not appetizing. The tablecloths had apparently been used a month without seeing

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water; they were covered with the stains of food, beer and tea; they reeked with the memory of a hundred meals. The white coats of the waiters harmonized with these tablecloths; they too showed a genial absence of all prejudice against dirt. We concluded that the water of Russia is not only unfit to drink (as in many other lands), but must not be used for washing. The food was strange, but nourishing: good black bread, rich *borsch* or cabbage soup, *pilav* ragout, *pirozhki* cakes filled with meat or rice, and *tchai*, the eternal, omnipresent tea. We were shocked at the prices; each simple meal cost from six to eight rubles, that is, from three to four dollars. For the steward of the dining-car explained suavely that the law of the Soviets forbade the exchange of more than two rubles for a dollar. Luckily there was also an American price-list, far more reasonable; we unearthed it from its hiding-place and got along, while the steward, who had hoped to sell us many rubles, mourned. The waiters worked hard, and never had time to wash their hands. They served us fitfully, misunderstood us to their hearts' content, and were gladly corrupted by our tips.

Back in our car we struck up acquaintance, through our halting German, with a Russian doctor and a Jewish engineer. The Jew told of the pogroms he had seen in the days of the Tsars, and spoke gratefully of his people's freedom under the Soviets. The

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doctor was a giant who liked the hardships he was encountering in his work among the construction camps; he smiled at our American comforts, and preferred Siberia; "there are heroic things to be done here," he said, magnificently. Together they sang for us the latest revolutionary songs. Their spirit infected us, and we began to thrill with the tempo of this enterprise, the promise of this reborn land.

When we arrived at our first destination we were already enthusiastic Bolsheviks. We prepared cheerfully to leave the train and plunge into the midst of Siberia. Here at Omsk, where Dostoievski had spent his years of exile in the House of the Dead, we would breathe the fresh air of Russia's liberation, and study at closer range these sturdy people who were bearing short rations gladly while they built Utopia.

III. A NIGHTMARE IN OMSK

The station was vast and impressive; as we entered it I thought of the thousands of exiles who had passed through it before and after the Revolution. But my historical fancy was distracted by present sensation. This spacious waiting-room was quite literally covered with people; not merely the benches, but every foot of the floor; people squatting, sitting,

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standing, leaning, reclining, lying down, on and amidst their forlorn baggage of boxes, sacks, baskets and bags; people of all ages, but of only one condition—poverty final and complete. We had never seen poverty like this, not even in China or India; for there the poor are naked, and the human body, barring deformity, has a redeeming dignity not possessed by the pitiful rags that covered these spiritless bodies, the torn boots that covered a few of these feet. We had seen filth like this, at Canton or Benares, but nowhere worse filth than these faces encrusted with the soil, these hairs thick and tangled with dust, these eyes half closed with dirt. Everywhere in the station they lay, like fish squirming in a box; we needed the help of broad porters' shoulders to find a pathway through them; and when we emerged by another door into the street, the crowd was there too, at least two hundred more, making seats and beds out of the mud of the road. What were they doing here? We learned the reason later: they were waiting—a day, a week, or a month—for their chance to get a train out of Omsk. But the trains were rare, and the cars were almost full when they reached Omsk; these people had to take their turn. Why did they wish to leave Omsk? We should not ask that question tomorrow.

The guide-book had spoken of taxis, and had given their rates; but there were no taxis, there were only

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moribund cabs, old *drosbkies* whose listless drivers announced that it would cost us one hundred and twenty rubles—that is, sixty dollars—to transport ourselves and our five pieces of baggage three miles to the hotel. My young vocabulary was soon exhausted upon them; failing to understand one another, we piled into the cabs nevertheless, trusting to a *fait accompli* to clarify for us the murky metaphysics of the ruble. Over the uneven cobbles and the mud-puddles of the streets we passed precariously to the town. Some of the houses were shacks, some were modest but presentable little structures one story high; they were all of wood, and obviously dated from the ancient régime. The only new buildings were the well-constructed factories, and the offices of the Grain Trust. Main Street was here a thoroughfare of small and gloomy stores, in which hardly any customers could be seen. On the rough sidewalks and the curbs sat a good part of the population of this city of 116,000 souls; they squatted wherever the earth would receive them, and offered their little wares, or waited idly for paradise. They were almost as shabby and destitute as the derelicts at the station. Through them we picked our way into the hotel to which Intourist, official travel bureau for the Soviet Government, had sent our request for a room.

On the letter-rack stood our reservation, long since delivered, but still unopened because addressed in

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English.★Nevertheless, there were rooms; and we chose one furnished with a table, two simple wooden chairs, and frail little iron beds covered only with thin historic comforters pungent with age. The lady in charge timidly informed us that this room would be ours for a night for the small sum of thirty-six rubles—eighteen dollars. We inquired into the whereabouts of food, and were told that we might eat in the neighboring *stolovaia* at ten rubles per person per meal. We calculated the cost of this one day in Omsk: it would come to a hundred dollars. We had but twenty rubles with us, and our American money, which we had been told would find ready currency in Russia, was refused on every hand; it was illegal for a Russian to take it, and even the State Bank would change it only at the rate of 1.94 rubles per dollar. The Government insisted that its rubles were worth fifty-three cents; but when it sold its products or services, its rubles bought the equivalent of from two to five cents—in Omsk it was nearer two. This was our first taste of Soviet finance.

I was in despair, and flung mispronounced Russian words about me in the effort to explain that this frenzied finance was incredible; but the *izvoschiki* and the landlady stared at me mutely—they would have their rubles. It was Ariel, my traveling companion, who saved me, as she was to do so many

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times on this chaotic trip. She stalked every person she could find in the hotel, and confronted each of them with the challenge: *Sprechen Sie Deutsch?* One answered *Ja*; Ariel gripped him with firm hands and brought him to our salvation. He was a buying agent for a Soviet Government organization which we shall designate under the initials N.A.R. He was tall and thin, quiet and strong; his boots were the cleanest we had seen in Russia, and his leather jacket marked him out as a man of some prosperity and power. Ariel explained our situation to him in German almost as bad as my Russian; he took it in swiftly, and cleared the air with a word and a bundle of rubles. With the help of our own little batch he paid the cabmen, paid the hotel-keeper, and sent out for some food to a station nearby. When it came—chopped meat, tapioca and black bread—he sat down to share it with us; and, pledging us to secrecy, unburdened his soul.

"Let us arrange," he said, softly, "that if anyone enters the room we shall be talking of the virtues of Stalin."

We agreed; and assured by our innocence that we could not possibly be spies, he answered our questions with a candor that shocked us.

"Are the people of Omsk better off," we asked him, "than before the Revolution?"

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He smiled bitterly.

"In those days some of us were poor, others were neither poor nor rich, others were rich. Now we are all poor—all but the N.A.R., for printing is cheap." (He was to refuse more than five dollars for all the rubles he spent on us.) "In those days we had food to eat; today the people starve."

A moment later a maid knocked at the door, and brought us tea. We handed her a borrowed ruble, but she refused it. Then, pointing to a piece of bread, she begged for it humbly, and striking her stomach whispered (even without interpretation we could understand her):

"I am starving."

We could hardly believe her. We handed her the slice of bread; she bowed almost to the floor, and rushed out, leaving the worthless ruble behind.

"Promise me," said the N.A.R. agent, "that when you return to your country you will report truthfully what you have seen: this maid, those people in the street, those at the station, this organized starvation."

He went on passionately, for he had suffered. Condemned to ten years in Siberia for "speculation"—that is, for selling things which only the State might sell—he had many times been near death through much labor and little food. He had worked his way out of imprisonment into a place of comfort and

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power; and yet he hated this communism as the enemy of all freedom and happiness.

"But," we protested, "we have been told that the people voluntarily accept this restraint, and these short rations, in order to industrialize their country, and make it secure in case of war."

"It is not so," he said. "Eighty per cent of us despise the Soviet Government. It is turning us all into slaves."

"If the people despise the Government why don't they overthrow it?"

Through the window came the dull rhythm of marching feet. Every second it grew stronger, until we saw in the street below a squad of soldiers pounding by with heavy boots.

"Every hour they pass by," said the man from the N.A.R. "They do not enjoy it; but they have to remind us, every hour, that we have no guns, and must obey. If it were not for that army. . . ."

"If the people despise the Government, why do they join the army?"

"In order not to starve."

He left us, and the landlady entered—almost the only woman we met in Russia who had some of the old beauty of the Russian face. In a little while, through another guest who interpreted her into German, we had her story. She had been well-to-do under the old régime; but when the Revolution came

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her property was confiscated, her money and her jewels taken; she was grateful that she had not been shot, but had been allowed to earn a bare subsistence by taking care, for the Government, of this hotel.

"How much are you paid?" we asked.

"Forty rubles per month."

"What do you eat?"

"Bread and tea."

"Anything else?"

"Sometimes."

Having found the privy unusable because of the poor eyesight of the Russians, we persuaded the landlady to clean it. She agreed with a weary smile. We understood her smile the next day, when we found conditions as before.

That afternoon I stood in the rain for an hour, with our friend of the N.A.R., waiting for a bus to take us to the station, where I was to present to the commandant an order from Intourist for a *coupe* to Moscow on the Friday train. Across the street a red banner announced the progress of communism in China, and its approaching victory throughout the world. Nearby was a fine statue of Lenin receiving Dora Kaplan's bullet; a bird, not having read *Das Kapital*, sat on his forehead and voided its waste on his nose. A gigantic Mongol, waiting with us, grew tired of standing, and lay down full length in the mud of the rain-soaked road. The little bus came

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and we fought for standing room in it; the place I won was behind a lucky peasant who carried some naked fish under his arm, tickling one neighbor with their heads, and myself with their oily tails.

At the station we waited three hours for the station-master, while around us half a thousand paupers moved noisily among their bags, mothers scolded, and children cried. At seven o'clock the commandant returned to his office, read my letter, and informed me that all the places on the Friday train were taken, and that we should have to wait until Monday. The thought of keeping Ariel five days instead of two in the midst of this destitution horrified me; and I, who had entered Russia by the back door in the hope of remaining unnoticed and unescorted, was driven to the expedient of showing a letter of introduction from the most famous of American senators. The commandant melted a little, and promised that tickets would be ready for me in his office at three o'clock the following afternoon. I began to learn that the most terrible of all things in Russia is the difficulty of getting out.

Waiting for the bus that was to take us back, I saw a little more of the station crowd. Children hunted in the bags of their parents and found hard crusts of bread, which they munched feverishly. One man scratched a bone out of the road, brushed away some of the dirt with his sleeve, and bit hungrily

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into the rotten meat. A hay-wagon passed, on which a man lay prostrate, rolling helplessly; soon, surely, his head would be caught in the wheel. My N.A.R. guide smiled at my concern.

"Don't worry about him," he advised me. "Can't you see that he's dead—dead of starvation? It happens too frequently to bother about it."

Yes, Omsk itself was dying. Its population was falling day by day; within the year it had been surpassed by Novo-Sibirsk, the new capital of Siberia. In the old days it had been a busy center of trade, full of merchants and goods; there was no place or function for it now, since the stores were half empty and the State controlled all the commerce of the land. Perhaps the Soviet remembered how Kolchak had made Omsk his counter-revolutionary capital; what difference did it make, to a stoic rebuilder of nations, that a few decrepit souls, or cities, died?

In the streets, as we walked from the bus to the hotel, the people glared at me sullenly; surely, I meditated, they must be tempted to see what I have in my pockets. That night, while we tried to sleep, a group of Russians gathered below our window, and began some loud dispute. For hours it continued. About three o'clock in the morning they entered the hotel, climbed the shaky stairs, and continued their fracas before our door. I assured Ariel that this was natural and usual in Russia; but we did not sleep

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that night. I think I misjudged those people; doubtless it was some problem in philosophy that they discussed so passionately, and not the contents of our purse. We found much petty thieving in Russia, but seldom any violence. These oppressed souls are accustomed to starvation; like the Chinese, they have realized Macaulay's wish, and learned the art of dying quietly.

The next day we made the acquaintance of the head of a large concern which, of course, he managed as an agent of the Government; for everywhere, in every store, in every hotel, in every building, it was the Government with which one had to deal; there was no escape from it, and no appeal. In the secrecy of his little room he told us, in broken German, that he, too, hated the new Utopia.

"We are in prison," he said, in the cautiously low tones of a terrorized soul. "If we leave our work without permission of the State, we forfeit our bread-ticket, which gives us the right to stand in line to buy bread; and without that ticket we starve. If we strike for better wages we are shot. If we protest we are arrested in the night, and condemned without trial. On every side of us there are spies; every citizen is encouraged to be an informer. We have no social life, for we fear to visit even those whom we think our friends; they, too, may inform the police of any remark we make that smacks of independent

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thought. Each of us, through fear, stays in his hole, and tries to speak as little as possible—which is very hard for a Russian. In the old days there were many prisoners here; now we are all prisoners. If any of us tries to leave Russia he is shot down at the frontier. Ah, you fortunate Americans, who can go where you like and say what you please! I would give an arm to go back with you.”

At three in the afternoon I presented myself at the office of the station-master, but again he was absent, and his office was closed. “He will be back in a moment,” said his aide, with Communistic optimism. Could I call up Ariel and tell her that I would be late? No; the only telephone available was in the commandant’s office, and the door was locked; it was one of some thirty telephones in the city. I waited till seven. The commandant came, smiled at my impatience, and told me that his effort to get me a place on tomorrow’s train had not yet been successful; his telegram to Novo-Sibirsk had not been answered. “Come tomorrow morning,” he suggested. I went back to the hotel and lied to Ariel.

“Everything is arranged; there will be a *coupé* for us on tomorrow’s train.”

We left the hotel at seven the next morning to make sure that we would be in time for the train, which was due at eight forty-five. I pestered the

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station-master for tickets; he replied that none had come yet. We sat in a corner fretting; perhaps we, too, would have to squat here in the station for days and nights, or have to return to the hotel we had so gladly left. It seemed to us that nothing could be more terrible. The clock passed eight forty-five, but no train appeared. Eternity passed, and the clock showed half-past-eleven. I went again to the commandant, and waited in the confusion of his office for my turn to speak with him. He handed me two tickets. I took them as gratefully as if they had been passports from hell.

Fifteen minutes later the train appeared—one of three that pass through Omsk to Moscow every week. I presented my tickets to the conductor. He looked at them, returned them, and forbade us to board the train.

"These tickets," he said in German, "are not good for this train."

"But this is the Trans-Siberian Express for Moscow?"

"Yes."

When he turned away for a moment I motioned to the porter to lift our bags into the car. He did, and we followed them. The commandant happening to pass by, I called him, and succeeded in explaining to him that his tickets had been dishonored. He en-

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tered the car, examined each compartment, and found them full of Soviet officials of chiefly low degree; probably not one compartment in the car had been paid for. Two *coupés* were each occupied by a single tenant. The commandant suggested that Ariel should occupy a berth in one of these compartments for two, and I a berth in the other; he could not enter with much sympathy into Ariel's reactionary objections to spending four nights with a stranger. At last one of the officials agreed to share a compartment with another, leaving his own to us. The commandant disappeared, convinced of his efficiency. The train moved slowly out of Omsk, and we prayed that we might never see it again.

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The conductor, shocked to find us aboard, protested that our tickets were still worthless. After eight hours of argument we convinced him; and for the first time in three nights we slept a peaceful sleep. When we awoke we found the train stalled by a wreck ahead. Hours later we crawled by it—shattered freight and passenger cars lying on either side; surely a score of people must have been killed. The next day we were again delayed by a wreck. It could not be helped, the conductor explained to us; Russia

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lacked engineers, and had to use briefly-trained men. We did not sleep so peacefully after that.

The train reached Moscow twelve hours late at four in the morning, and we were bundled out mercilessly. No taxis were to be had till seven; and even if there were, said a young Intourist guide, we should find all the hotels closed between four and seven a. m. (The guide confided to us that twice in the last three years he had tried to get out of Russia, and had twice been turned back at the frontier.) Three hours we waited in the station—which was commodious and clean; then, almost happy, we bounced through the streets of Moscow toward the Metropole Hotel, where Intourist of New York had reserved a room for us.

How bright the streets and buildings of Moscow were in the morning sun! Some of the avenues were smoothly paved; in 1912 they had been content with cobblestones. Private automobiles were few, but busses were many, and the trams were frequent and full. Shacks and palaces passed by us in chaotic alternation; the bizarre grandeur of old churches mingled with the crude boxes and parallel lines of modernistic monstrosities; the great stores, that had given color to this thoroughfare twenty years before, were closed, and white sheets draped their vast windows dismally. Dingy tenements opened their sleepy portals, and sent forth streams of workers to shops

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and factories. These people seemed better dressed than those in Omsk, though they had caps for hats and "sneakers" for shoes; and their blouses, though unwashed, were a picturesque and sensible costume. The manners seemed rough, but not unkind; the faces were coarse, but more regular than those of the half-Mongol people of Siberia. But here, too, as there, every countenance was sullen and gloomy; in all of Russia, from one end to the other, except for one German, one Jew, and the audiences at the theatres, we did not see a native smile or hear a native laugh. This was a people at war—I could not quite tell whether it was with the world, or with their Government.

Arrived at the Metropole, we found it closed for repairs; no reservation had been made for us at any time. But the famous Coffee Shop was open; and though we paid a ruble for a roll and three rubles for a cup of coffee, we breakfasted with relish, four hours after being routed out of our berths. Then we picked up our baggage again, and set out in search of a bed. We passed the Red Square—majestic, spacious, clean; already, at nine in the morning, a line of pilgrims was waiting to enter the tomb of Lenin. At the Novo-Moskovaya Hotel we sought the headquarters of Intourist; they, if anyone, could find some place for us to lay our heads.

The lobby was full of excited tourists: idealists

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from a dozen exploited nations, freaks and cranks of a dozen creeds; here were some bearded lads in red shirts and green suspenders, proud that they were not like other men; here were thin virgins seeking a new religion, school-teachers flirting breathlessly with heresy, and professors anxious to approve of everything. All was confusion. No one knew where to go for anything; and the attendants, compelled to please only the State, listened carelessly to the questions of the bewildered crowd. This, surely, was the primeval chaos that preceded the creation of the world.

We were wrong; the real chaos was in the offices of Intourist itself. Twenty attendants bustled around twenty visitors, and yet nothing seemed to get done. An Englishman fumed at the loss of his baggage; accustomed to starch and water, he grieved over his soiled and collarless shirt, not knowing that these would ingratiate him with the people. A young German Communist, with wrong tickets for everything, cried out angrily that Russian Communism was *schrecklich*, but that "when we make the Revolution in Germany, everything will be different." A famous Russian author entered, saw the helpless discontent of the visitors, and commented: "Intourist is the most counter-revolutionary organization in Russia." An American business man cheered us by telling us that every room in the hotel was taken, and con-

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gratulated us because the food here was terrible, the water, of course, undrinkable, no beer to be had, no water in the shower-baths, and no order to be found anywhere. Furtively he presented us with a roll of tissue-paper, as an element of civilization which Russia honored more in the breach than in the observance.

But in the end we were fortunate. At noon, eight hours after our arrival at the Mecca of our dreams, room was found for us at the Savoy Hotel. It was a relic of the old régime, well managed and maintained under the new. At last order and quiet, cleanliness and a bath! White sheets, hot water, and vast bourgeois towels. We washed the dirt of a week from our bodies, and ate wholesome food once more. We hurried out into the sunny streets reluctant and reconciled, anxious to see at work this Communism that was the hope of the world.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CRISIS IN COMMUNISM

I. THE COMMUNIST HONEYMOON

IF we wish to understand Russia in 1932, we must understand what happened to it in 1921; today's crisis repeats that earlier one, on a large scale.

Russia was happy in 1917; the soldiers had come back from the wars, and by their help the worst of modern despotisms had been overthrown. Strangers meeting in the streets of Petrograd embraced one another like brothers, for the dawn had come. When a mother wept because her child was dead, a youth reproached her: "Mother, why do you cry? Don't you know that socialism has come, and that we shall all be happy now?" It was in that mood, uplifted in courage and nobility, that Russia threw off in three terrible years of Civil War the attacks of Kolchak, Denikin, Yudenitch and Wrangel, expelled Japan from Siberia, and drove the Allies, resentful of repudiated loans and confiscated property, out of Archangel's icy wilderness.

And it was in that mood, fortified by the solidarity of war, that Russia advanced to the communist experiment. Lenin, whose mistakes were as great as his genius, decreed the nationalization of the land,

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the railroads, the factories and the banks; the State took over all trade, domestic and foreign, and set itself to replacing, by foresight and calculation, the immemorial laws of supply and demand. Bernard Shaw would be taken at his word; every man would receive an equal share of the national income, and would be forced to earn it. The lowliest worker in the simplest factory would receive the same wages as the highest commissar, and the toilers in each plant would determine by their own free vote the policies and conditions of their industry. The one supreme law would be the law of Utopia: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his need."

This plan—the dream for which thousands of Nihilists had plotted, and thousands of revolutionists had died—was put into effect in 1918. For a time the spirit of war maintained the system, and supplied the enthusiasm needed to spur on to their work men and women who had been shorn of all traditional motives to production. But as external enemies receded, internal discord grew. It was found that when the laziest and stupidest worker receives equal material reward with the ablest and cleverest, the ablest and cleverest will slack down to the productive level of the laziest and stupidest as soon as the heat of revolutionary fever subsides. It was found that when the workers in a shop could take time off at their own will for loquacious parliaments whose demo-

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cratic decrees—based upon ignorance of every phase of the industry except that immediately at hand—were law to the managerial and technical staff, the rate of production would fall until every store would be empty of goods, and that condition would be reached under which alone equality is possible—there would be nothing to share.

By 1921 this wild-cat communism had brought industrial production down to one-tenth of the pre-war level, trade had been replaced by primitive barter, and civilization, which depends upon an economic surplus, was giving way to barbarism on every hand. Tsarist Russia had bequeathed war and chaos to the Revolution, but it had also bequeathed a certain measure of industrial equipment, capital and goods; the chaos had not been lessened by communism, but the capital, the equipment and the surviving stock of manufactured goods had been ruined, depleted or destroyed. Only one element in economic society continued to function, and that was the peasants, who, despite war and requisitions, death and taxes, had toiled on patiently, and had found in their own natures, under private ownership of the soil, and individual responsibility and reward, the old spontaneous incentives to production and enterprise. But now the peasants were in rebellion against the brutal plundering of their crops by proletarian armies; by 1920 they were reducing their sowings to what would

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suffice for their own local needs, and agricultural production dropped to less than half the level it had reached before the War. When, in 1921, drought brought ruin to many of the surviving crops, all Russia began to starve. The Communist Honeymoon was over.

II. A TRIAL OF LIBERTY

Capitalist nations were appealed to for help, and out of their surplus grain they sent enough to moderate the starvation. America, denounced by Russians as a land of greedy individualists, was the most generous and effective in her help. But it was Lenin who saved the country. He could make gigantic mistakes, but he could learn. Overwhelming his party with a simple description of the ruin that surrounded them, he persuaded it to adopt what he called a "New Economic Policy," which was in reality the oldest economic policy in the world—liberty of production and trade. The peasants, despite the paper nationalization of the land, were confirmed in their possession of the soil; they were guaranteed against requisitions of their surpluses, and payments in produce were replaced by money taxes fixed in advance. Many factories and industries were turned over to private enterprise, state industries were required to show a

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profit or be denationalized, foreign capital was invited by concessions to develop Russia's resources, private trade was permitted to re-appear and flourish, technicians were imported and offered high rewards, wages were diversified into classes according to ability and work done, and discipline in the factories became the dominant note of the Marxian scholars of the day. Lenin consoled his followers, and saved faces generally, by announcing that this was only a temporary and strategic retreat, and that communism would come by and by.

Nothing could be more illuminating for the student of society than the rapidity with which Russia, though supposedly ruined by foreign and civil war, recovered from devastation and destitution under the stimulus of the profit-motive in agriculture, industry and trade. Within a few years everything was thriving. "From 1922 to 1925," says Seibert, "and perhaps even to 1927, there was a period of recovery in Russia. Even though in respect of details the Soviet statistics may be open to criticism, it is generally agreed that by 1927 the pre-war standards of industrial production had been regained."¹ Population rose almost overnight to cancel the slaughter of war, and peasant holdings multiplied by millions every year. The sheets that had been drawn across the windows of the stores were taken down,

¹ *Red Russia*, New York, 1932, p. 334.

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and the shelves and windows filled up again. So productive were the factories in private hands that the taxes laid upon them and upon private tillage and trade were able to carry along, as deadweights, the nationalized industries that were still running at great loss. In 1930, for example, socialized operations paid the state 6,000,000,000 rubles, and took from the state 13,000,000,000 rubles; private economic operations paid the state 7,000,000,000 rubles, and received from the state 1,500,000,000 rubles; in effect the private "sector" subsidized the socialized sector by 5,500,000,000 rubles.¹ Russia was beginning to eat again, but communism was dying.

Meanwhile, in 1923, Lenin broke down; and for eight months, in a country village outside of Moscow he lay between life and death. In his last lucid moments he wrote the famous "testament" which practically nominated Trotsky as his successor, and warned the Party against entrusting leadership to Stalin. Perhaps if Lenin had lived he would have continued to take tuition from experience, and might have guided his country, by trial and error, to industrial prosperity and peace. But while Lenin lay helpless, Stalin, strategically placed as General Secretary of the Communist Party, concealed the "testament," prohibited its publication, vilified Trotsky through control of the press, and removed him from one position after an-

¹ Hopper, Bruce, *Pan-Sovietism*, Boston, 1931, p. 168.

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other, until at last he could remove him from the Party and from Russian soil. When, in January, 1924, Lenin died, Stalin took over quietly all the actual reins of power.

He had come through half a century of revolutionary devotion and hardship, and he was seared with the memory of his imprisonments and the sufferings of his people under the old régime. He was not happy at their new prosperity, for it had come at a heavy price. Ruthless profiteers were rising who, between the visits of the tax-collector, managed to amass wealth and parade it in ways that threatened to revive all the old class distinctions and the old class war. In the countryside the inequality of human endowment and heritage was differentiating the peasants once more into strong and weak, rich and poor; and the *kulak* promised soon to be master of the soil. Stalin did not stop to compromise, as Lenin might have done, or as Rykov and Bukharin wished to do; with a few strokes of his pen from 1924 on he made illegal one section of private enterprise after another, closed the well-stored shops, sent the *Tcheka* to confiscate private fortunes, savings, and possessions, and set himself to "liquidate" the *kulak*, or rich peasant, from the land. By 1928 Stalin's reforms were complete: private industry and trade were abolished, and the second experiment in socialism began.

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III. PYATILETKA

Among the thousand difficulties that confronted Stalin on his coming to power, two were elemental. One was the possibility of war: at any moment Russia's enemies might pounce upon her and put an end to a competitor that promised, by cheap labor and centralized control, to undersell them in the markets of the world. If that attack came soon, it would find Russia unprepared; the army was well organized, but where were the coal mines, the steel factories, the power stations, the locomotives that could produce and transport the equipment and munitions of war? Stalin resolved that his basic task was to build at any cost the heavy industries on which national defense would depend.

To do this, however, Russia would have to import machinery and technicians; to pay for these she would have to export grain, lumber, furs and oil. But how could she export grain when her cities were always on the verge of starvation, and her peasants were resisting ever more bitterly the forcible exchange of their surplus for worthless rubles and a minimum of industrial goods? Stalin concluded that his second task was to persuade or compel the peasants to produce more grain.

His choice of means was difficult. For years Trotsky

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had argued for the industrialization of agriculture, the withdrawal of private possession of the land, and the gathering of the peasants, if necessary, by force, into collective farms extensive enough to permit the economical use of the latest and largest agricultural machinery. How could a tractor be used, asked Trotsky, on a small individual farm that might be composed of little strips of land scattered here and there around the village, as was so often the case with a peasant's holdings?—and how could agriculture remain solvent in any country if it persisted in using the methods of the eighteenth century in the midst of an industrialized world using all the machinery of the twentieth?

But Rykov, learned head of the Supreme Economic Council, Tomskey, head of the trade unions, and Bukharin, the philosopher of communism, advised against forcible collectivization. It was not yet ten years since Lenin had won the peasants to the Revolution by his famous penciled decree giving them the land, and legalizing their appropriation and division of the baronial estates; what irony it would be to take that land away from them so soon! Hunger for the land is the basic thing in the economic order; and though the peasants had been serfs for two centuries before their emancipation in 1862, they remembered their ancient traditions of ownership, and dreamed, each of them, of the time when he might own his individual piece of earth, so that he and his family might enjoy on it the

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fruits of their industry, inventiveness and thrift. To take the land from them when they had so recently completed those arduous payments which Alexander II had exacted from them as the price of their emancipation from serfdom would again be bitter irony; sixty years of toil and savings gone, and only another serfdom as culmination and reward! Surely, said the leaders of the "Right Deviation," the peasants would revolt, and destroy or retard the Revolution.

Stalin answered that if the peasants were allowed to keep the land in private ownership they would destroy the Revolution anyway; that nothing could be more disastrous to socialism than the growth, beneath it, of a vast population of peasants made petty bourgeois in spirit and loyalty by individual ownership of the soil. No state could survive, he felt, if it were ten per cent communist and ninety per cent individualist. To prevent the peasant from becoming, like the French *paysan*, an enemy to socialism through pride of possession, he must be brought into collectives where the sense of individual ownership could be starved and lost, and where the peasants would be employees of the Government precisely like proletaires in the factories. In this way would come that classless state of which all socialists had dreamed. Stalin, having exiled Trotsky, concluded that Trotsky was right, and that the peasant must be made to enter a collective farm.

It was to achieve this end, and at the same time to

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industrialize Russia sufficiently to make her self-contained in war, that the Five Year Plan was designed. The peasants must be compelled to grow more grain, the grain must be exported, machinery must be imported, Russia must starve herself into security. To persuade an underfed people to eat less, to persuade a rebellious peasantry to produce more, to persuade a tired and querulous proletariat to work faster in the shops and mines, a slogan was needed, a myth that would give to industry and agriculture all the spirit of a contest of continental giants, a race against time and national death. A magnificent machine of propaganda was formed, to turn tractors into dramas, pig-iron into poetry, statistics into literature; every hour of the day the radio, the platform, the school, the press, and a thousand banners in the streets were to din the Five Year Plan into the ears and souls of the Russian people, until they would resolve to accomplish it if only to be freed from that word *Pyatiletka* forever. Never was any task of propaganda done more thoroughly or more successfully; not only did Russia believe that the Five Year Plan would put her industrially abreast of western Europe, and that another five years would put her abreast of the United States, but every sentimental and rebellious soul in every continent believed it too. All the world began to talk of the Five Year Plan; and even America, suffering from her capacity to produce, trembled lest in a decade this prancing

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Bear might turn her by comparison into a second-rate industrial state.

IV. RESULTS

Since the life of the Plan depended upon the export of grain, the first point of attack was the peasant; willy-nilly he must be collectivized. Of course he did not like it; the very basis of personality on the farm is the ownership of land; therefore the peasant clung to his little holding as to his very soul. Only the poorest *muzhiks*, those, who, in the ten years since the Revolution, had sunk to the lower levels of the peasantry, entered the collectives of their own free will. The well-to-do peasant, or *kulak*, resisted bitterly, and preached to his neighbors a holy war against these Antichrists from the city who came to reduce them to serfdom again.

The Communists answered by making prosperity illegal; every peasant who had more than thirty-seven acres, or more than three cattle, or more than two hired men, was denounced as an enemy of the state; hundreds of thousands of them were arrested, their land and goods were confiscated for the collectives, their families were broken up, and the men, mute bearded giants pitiful in their fall, were packed into

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unfurnished cars and herded off to Siberia. Some of them deserved it well, having grown rich by selling vodka, lending money at high interest, and underpaying their help; many of them, however, were helpless victims of a situation which they could not understand.

But of these remaining peasants many still refused to come into the collective. To avoid being classed as *kulaks*, they killed and ate, or sold, all their cattle above two; and as most of the *kulaks* had done likewise, there was a general slaughter in those years of a billion and a half dollars' worth of cattle, which it will require a decade to replace.¹ One half of the pigs, one third of the cattle, were so destroyed; this is the source of the present dearth of meat and draft-animals in Russia.

Meanwhile promises were held out to the reluctant peasant of a paradise in the collective; plans were shown him, and in some cases were realized, for spacious playgrounds, dining-rooms, laundries, nurseries, kindergartens, libraries, hospitals, schools, clubs and cinema-halls; films were made which depicted the joy and heroism of collective work. When the *muzhik* still hesitated, the definition of *kulak* was broadened to take in the middle peasant; any visible sign of prosperity was sufficient to invite confiscation. When,

¹ Hopper, p. 130.

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by a hundred devices, seventy-five per cent of the peasants in a village had been brought into the collectives, the rest were dispossessed of their holdings and the district was reported as successfully and completely socialized; all proletarian Russia, and the whole radical world, thrilled to hear that the program of collectivizing agriculture was three years ahead of the Plan, and that soon individual tillage would be no more. Vast farms of half a million acres swallowed up the little strip-holdings. A new order was born; machinery was imported on a large scale and tractors began to move slowly and haltingly over the steppes. One of the greatest economic revolutions in history seemed to be complete.

But the collectivized peasant was not happy. Clandestinely he fed a little more than the average food to the pig that had been his, and looked with wistful memory upon his ancient boundaries. He was allowed to live in his own cottage, and sometimes to have his own cow; there, after his eight hours or more of collective work, he toiled in his individual garden, trying to solace those ancestral instincts, or transmitted habits and feelings, which had generated, or been generated by, centuries of individual property. But as time went on the old cottages decayed, while the barracks in the collective grew up to take their place; more and more the peasant found himself living in intolerable publicity, all the impulses of com-

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panionship and rivalry satisfied, all the instincts for privacy and solitude thwarted ruthlessly.

And despite the collectives, the exploitation of the peasants by the proletaires continued. Having left their homes, the *muzhiks* abandoned the domestic industries which had constituted so large a proportion of industrial products before the war; they had no time now to make their clothing, hats, shoes, and tools; they demanded that these should come from the city. But these goods seldom came; and when they came the peasant was shocked to find how much they cost in comparison with old days, or with the low prices paid to the collective for its grain. When the peasant was allowed to sell grain in the open market it brought 20 rubles for 36 lbs.; the same amount sold under compulsion to the state brought two rubles.¹ The task of the peasant was apparently to supply a wasteful industry with funds. In one of his many unguarded moments Zinoviev admitted: "We have hitherto been living at the expense of the peasants."² In a still more unguarded moment a peasant told a state official what communism and "The Workers' and Peasants' Republic" actually meant: "Yes, we own the land, but you own the grain; we own the forest, but you own the trees; we own the water, but you own the fish." When, in March, 1930, Stalin re-

¹ Louis Fischer in *The Nation*, New York, Aug. 24, 1932.

² Seibert, p. 336.

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versed the policy of a year and forbade the forcible retention of the *muzhiks* in the collectives, the peasants left them almost *en masse*.¹

To permit this for any length of time would have meant the defeat of Stalin and the Five Year Plan. Very soon, by coaxing, promises, threats, social compulsion, and the refusal of the state to sell tools or manufactured articles to the individual peasant, the collectives filled up again. But the peasants continued their silent war; they worked listlessly despite the careful piece-work accounting of their labor; and at every chance some of them sabotaged and stole. (At the only collective which I was permitted to see, the Communist director complained that the members sabotaged; the older peasants trooped gloomily through the street from the village church; and the others ate in even deeper cheerlessness in the dingy and diminutive collective dining room.) The traditional motives to work and self-development having been taken away, and even the money of the state having lost its lure through depreciation and the dearth of industrial goods, the old laziness of the Russian peasant, which individual ownership had begun to destroy, reappeared; and force and fear, spying and penalties had to be substituted for the natural incentives to toil. Stealing even a small quantity of grain from the col-

¹ Hoover, Calvin, *The Economic Life of Soviet Russia*, New York, 1931, p. 113.

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lective was made a capital crime, and was punished in many actual cases with death.

Nevertheless, production fell. Before the War the grain production per capita was 1,477 pounds per year; in 1930 it was 1,180 pounds; in 1931 despite all the new methods and machinery, it had fallen lower still.¹ From January 1 to August 25, 1931, 15,000,000 acres of grain were sown in Russia; in the same period in 1932, 7,000,000 acres.² On September 1, 1932, the grain collections were little more than half what they had been at that time in the preceding year; the area harvested was fifteen per cent smaller; the autumn sowing forty per cent less.³ Every agricultural crop except flax was far behind the program of the Plan;⁴ and it was observed by sceptics that fifty per cent of the flax was produced by individual cultivation.⁵ *Izvestia*, official organ of the Communist Party, indicted the entire organization of state and collective farms on the grounds of intolerable inefficiency.⁶

In this ancient war between the city and the country, it is the city that loses in the end; food is more important than manufactured goods. The Five Year

¹ Levine, *Red Smoke*, New York, 1932, p. 89.

² *Time*, Sept. 12, 1932.

³ Walter Duranty, *New York Times*, Sept. 13, 1932.

⁴ *Id.*, *Times*, Oct. 25, 1932.

⁵ Walter, *Russia's Decisive Year*, New York, 1932, p. 280.

⁶ *Current History*, July, 1932. It should be added that since the above was written, grain sowing and production, according to Mr. Duranty, have made great gains in Russia.

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Plan had promised to reduce the cost of living by fourteen per cent; but the cities found that prices were mounting twice as fast as wages, and that wages were being paid in rubles whose value fell from day to day, until living conditions were in many places worse than under the Tsar. Collective agriculture and state distribution, despite the elimination of profits and middlemen, were unable to keep the cities supplied with food; everything ran short, and cards had to be issued giving the holders permission to buy a loaf of bread in one store, a bit of butter in another, some tea in a third place, some sugar in a fourth. Once more, as in 1921, the cities began to starve.

The State again had recourse to its final resort—the army; it sent the soldiers, loyal because better fed and clothed than any but the officials of the Soviet, to requisition all available grain from each district, each collective farm; even a good part of the seed kept by the collectives for the fall sowing of 1932 was confiscated to feed the hungry towns. The peasants, too, began to starve, since not enough grain was left for their own meagre needs; they killed for food whatever cattle the “liquidation of the kulaks” had left; and every beast killed further reduced the future supply of animal food, and raised the cost of carrying the products of the collectives to the cities.

Again, as in 1921, foreign charity had to come to Russia's aid; those Russians who had relatives abroad

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sent out appeals for any kind of food; at this moment 100,000 Russians are being kept alive by food parcels sent to them from friends in the United States.¹ The starving peasants of the Ukraine sent a delegation to Stalin in the summer of 1932 to beg him to reduce the demands made by the ruthless *Gosplan*, or State Planning Commission, on their supply of grain, and to beg, indeed, for the transport of food back to the Ukraine so that that unhappy region (which would give billions to be free from Russia) might eat; but the Man of Steel refused; instead, he continued to export grain. For after all, there were many Russians; their birth rate was still the highest in the world; grain was more important than people, for grain could be sold. The cities had to be fed, or industry would stop.

V. THE FATE OF THE FIVE YEAR PLAN

In fact, industry was already, in the fourth and supposedly final year of the Plan, showing signs of exhaustion and rebellion as ominous as those on the farms. The Plan, inaugurated on October 1, 1928, had succeeded well in its first two years; its estimates had been revised upward with the optimism characteristic of Soviet statisticians, and all Russia had been keyed up with the new slogan, "The Five Year Plan in Four."

¹ Levine, p. 103.

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The initial success had been due to enthusiasm and devotion, and to the diversion of vast amounts of the government's revenues from normal channels to the task of providing equipment, labor and technical leadership for the heavier industries. But now the enthusiasm had waned, and a breakdown was threatening everywhere.

Shall we have a parade of figures? The Plan called for 9,500,000 tons of pig-iron for the first eight months of 1932; the production was 4,000,000 tons. The steel program for those eight months was 8,000,000 tons; steel production was 3,700,000 tons. The rolled metal program was 7,600,000 tons; the actual production, 2,800,000 tons. The copper program was 100,000 tons; copper production, 35,000 tons. Metal production in general was from twenty to forty per cent lower in July and August, 1932, than for April of that year.¹ The mineral resources of Russia, which had been so romantically exaggerated by politicians and poets everywhere, and which Stalin had counted as "more than any other country, . . . more than we need,"² proved to be wanting in some vital particulars: she was rich in platinum and manganese, but sadly lacking in iron, copper, lead, silver and gold; her coal deposits were situated so far from the centers of her population and her industry that the cost of

¹ *New York Times*, Sept. 13, 1932.

² Levine, p. 13.

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transporting it proved far higher than the cost of importing it from abroad. Government investment in coal production had risen from 92,000,000 rubles in 1925 to 471,000,000 in 1932—an increase of four hundred per cent; ¹ modern machinery had been installed in the Donetz mines, and the workers had been speeded up by every possible appeal to honor, fear and shame. Production had risen 100 per cent, but production per worker was lower in 1932 than in 1930 (*Pravda*, Aug. 20, 1932). In August, 1932, 20,000 workers in the Donetz Basin went out on strike, protesting that their wages were but seventy-five to one hundred rubles per month, while their food alone cost them seventy to one hundred and twenty rubles. Work in the mines was so arduous and unsafe that the German and American miners who had come there as staunch Communists broke their contracts and fled.² Coal production in the Donetz region, on which European Russia depends, fell from 186,000 tons a day in March, to 93,000 tons a day in August, 1932; on September 12th it was fifty per cent behind schedule; ³ and Moscow, anticipating a shortage of fuel, prepared for the worst winter since 1921.

Oil production was doing better—it was now second only to that of the United States; but it was

¹ American-Russian Chamber of Commerce, *Economic Handbook of the Soviet Union*, New York, 1931, p. 18.

² Walter, p. 275.

³ *New York Times*, Sept. 13, 1932.

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twenty-five per cent behind the program of the Plan.¹ Electric power stations had been built on a lavish scale, but power production was still but ten per cent of that of the United States, and it was found that many of the stations, in the flare of Lenin's enthusiasm for electricity as the generator of Communism, had been built in regions where they found little industry to feed. The great factories at Cheliabinsk, Stalingrad and Kharkhov were tumbling out tractors at a high rate, but again considerably below schedule; their products were hastily put together, and were often left incomplete, to rust under the elements; thirty per cent of the tractors in the Odessa district, for example, were reported as "disabled" in September, 1932. The gigantic automobile plant at Nizhni-Novgorod, which was designed to rival Henry Ford's, and on which millions of rubles were spent, was brought near to completion, was found incapable of functioning, and was abandoned.² Everywhere the deterioration of quality was nullifying the rise in quantity; of 15,000,000 metres of cloth woven in the Morozov mills of Moscow, 7,000,000 had to be discarded as "spoiled and useless"; and the shoes turned out in the Moscow factories wore out in three weeks.³ Industrial produc-

¹ *Ibid.*

² Lately a section of it has resumed operation.

³ *Time*, Sept. 12, 1932.

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tion as a whole, said *Pravda*,¹ was thirty per cent behind the program of the Plan.

Transport and trade were caught in a similar undertow. The airplane was doing well, and local transit was no worse managed than in New York; but the railroads were in bad condition, wrecks were frequent, and car-loadings were thirty per cent behind schedule in September, 1932. Foreign trade was falling almost as precipitately as America's; exports in the first five months of 1932 were twenty-five per cent less than for the same months of 1931; and there was an adverse trade balance of 100,000,000 rubles. Despite the advantage of centralized control of industry and commerce, and the elimination of middlemen, advertising, and salesmen, the cost of industrial production remained so high that had foreign competition been permitted to enter it would have wiped out nearly all Russian industry within a year,² for Russian products cost sixty per cent more than similar products, of better quality, made with far better paid labor abroad.³ The depression in western Europe and America, which Russia had welcomed proudly as the twilight of individualist industry, proved ruinous to the Five Year Plan: it decreased the ability of

¹ Aug. 20, 1932.

² Hopper, p. 120.

³ Chamberlain, W. H., *Soviet Russia*, Boston, 1930, pp. 156-7.

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Russia's customers to buy from Russia, and lowered the prices she received for grain. The precious valuta, or foreign currency, needed for the foreign purchase of machinery and the payment of foreign technicians, ceased to flow into Russia; factories were shut down for lack of vital parts; and thousands of technicians, whose wages could no longer be paid in the foreign money which their contracts demanded, returned to the countries from which they had come.

Finally the ruble itself—which had gone to pieces in 1921, had been abandoned, and had been re-issued later in forms guaranteed by the Soviet banks—fell once more in a toboggan of depreciation, from a value of fifty-two cents to a value of five, three or two cents; there were many forms of paper more precious than rubles in the Russia of 1932. Unable to get foreign loans, because resolutely refusing to repay the millions lent to Tsarist Russia for war and despotism, the Soviet had to finance its Industrial Revolution out of the stinting and saving of its people. It taxed them almost to the limit of their capacity, and then took from them, in one state loan after another, practically all that they had nevertheless managed to save. Subscription to these loans was made in effect compulsory by all the pressure of manufactured opinion and governmental strategy; trade union officials, properly instructed, put

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through, by a *viva voce* vote, motions for collective subscriptions by the unions to these loans, and each man's share was deducted from his little wage. Campaigns for these loans shrieked throughout Russia all day and night. Of the loan issue of 1928, eighty-seven per cent was extracted in this way, while the peasants, constituting eighty-five per cent of the population, subscribed for less than ten per cent; from the teachers, too well organized, twenty-five per cent of their salaries was clipped for the loan. Even so the State had to offer from nine to twelve per cent interest on the bonds to get them sold; or, instead of interest, it offered lottery prizes to the buyers of certain numbered bonds.¹ The lottery bonds proved far more attractive to the people, and far easier to sell, than those that offered interest; ² judge from this the natural individualism of men, and the incorrigible acquisitiveness that ruins every Utopia.

In Russia as elsewhere capital takes its return first, and struggles with the worker for the larger share. The State is one monstrous and united capitalist, a vast and inescapable corporation which controls all workers and all life, and can do no wrong.

¹ Seibert, pp. 270, 369.

² Chamberlain, p. 50.

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VI. THE RETURN OF THE INDIVIDUAL

Who will win this historic struggle between the collectivism of a government and the individualism of men? Can Stalin weather the storm? He has made mistakes, like Lenin; can he too, like Lenin, learn?

It seemed so when he delivered to his Party, on June 23, 1931, his famous address on "New Conditions, New Tasks." Consider what must have been the astonishment of his hearers when he proposed, as the second of these tasks, "to abolish equalitarianism in the sphere of wages"—the very doctrine with which Utopia had begun in 1918. "In a number of our industries," Stalin went on, "wage-scales are such as almost to destroy all difference between skilled and unskilled labor, between heavy work and light work. The consequence of equalitarianism is that the unskilled worker is not interested in becoming a skilled worker; he is thus deprived of the prospect of advancement, as the result of which he feels himself a sojourner in industry, working temporarily so as to earn a little and then to go off and seek his fortune elsewhere. . . . In order to put an end to this evil we must get rid of the equalitarian spirit and break down the old wage scales. . . . It cannot be tolerated that a highly skilled worker in a steel mill should earn no more than a sweeper. . . . It cannot be

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tolerated that a locomotive driver on a railway should earn only as much as a copying clerk." The Party, said its master, must take a new attitude of sympathy towards technicians and the economic intelligentsia; it must "introduce business method and apply it with greater care, and increase the accumulation of capital within industry itself." "It is necessary, further, that our combines"—trusts—"should replace management by collegium"—or managing committee—"with individual management. . . . We must put a stop to paper leadership, and adopt genuine, business-like, Bolshevik methods of work." ¹ "Business-like, Bolshevik methods of work"—surely this was a new tune in the revolutionary *étude*.

The new policy took the form, first of extending the principle of piece-work; wages were paid not according to the old Communist classification of categories, but strictly according to the quantity and quality of work done; even on the collective farms the old system of payment according to the number of members in a family was replaced by individual payment on the piece-work plan. It was an unexpected bit of humor to come across, in Berlin, a Soviet agent buying labor-meters to put upon tractors, to measure the exact laziness of the collectivized peasant; once again the theoretical motives of honor

¹ Joseph Stalin, *New Conditions, New Tasks*, Moscow, 1931, pp. 6-7, 20, 22.

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and applause had to be replaced by the old motives of personal gain.

Everywhere the impulse to private gain acts as a subterranean explosive in the Soviet economic system; the impulse takes a thousand subterfuges and new forms, but it is there. It is illegal, for example, for a Russian citizen to exchange rubles for foreign currency, but every second Russian does it. Perhaps the law was passed because the Government knew it would be disobeyed. It bided its time, allowed the *valuta* to accumulate, and then suddenly sent a million agents of the *Ogpu* to swoop down upon the accumulators and confiscate their foreign currency in the name, and for the pockets, of the State. People still save in Russia, despite their supposed security; and though these savings too are periodically expropriated through enforced loans, the State permits, within limits, and after the payment of high inheritance taxes, the transmission of the father's savings to his children, even to a hundred thousand rubles. So long as there is no transmission of the means of production, the Soviet feels secure; but as the bond-issues increase, a class arises whose interest-bearing coupons, transmissible to their children, constitute a lien on production, an invisible partial ownership—even as in a land of stocks and bonds—in the means of production and the fruits of the labor of unborn men. Throw individualism out of the door, and it

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will come in by the window; throw it out of the window, and it will come in through the cracks. "Institutions founded on communism," said Renan many years ago, "have a brilliant beginning, for communism always presupposes great exaltation; but they degenerate rapidly, being contrary to human nature."¹ No proposition in history has been more often refuted, or more often verified.

For a time the return of individualism went so far that in May, 1932, the Soviet legalized private trade, and extended permission to the peasant to sell in the open market, to the highest bidder, such products as were not requisitioned by the State. But it was, apparently, a momentary weakness; again Stalin saw that if this went on, communism and socialism would go under; and on September 24th he forbade all private trade and ordered the strict—if necessary the forcible—collection of definite quotas of grain and meat every three months from every state, collective, or private farm. He would make a final effort to replace the productive instincts of men with one instinct and one weapon—fear and force.

It is only a question of time before this last bitter trial of an unnatural economy will come to an end. Men cannot long be happy, or develop a civilized life, under forms of industry that copy the abnormal regimentation of war. This vast army of soldiers and

¹ *Les Apôtres*, p. 242; in Mott, *Life of Ernest Renan*, p. 410.

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spies, trying to make grain grow with guns, will absorb destructively whatever gains might come from collective and coördinated toil; these million bureaucrats, dilatory, careless and incompetent,¹ and these million plodding accountants, attempting to replace the natural economic operations of men, will absorb all the gains of an industry freed from competition, advertising and salesmanship. This very protection from all competitors, at home or abroad, must breed in the industrial politicians of the Soviet a carelessness, an incompetence, and a stagnating routine which will destroy them in the final economic test with a more liberal régime.

Yes, individualism is villainous, and gives us exploitation as well as liberty, slavery as well as wealth. But even if I imagine myself again as in my youth, a simple proletaire feeding a machine, I would rather a hundred times take my chance with the chaos and variety, the freedom and stimulus of America, than stifle under the disorder and uniformity, the despotism and serfdom of the Soviet.

¹ Cf. Chamberlain, pp. 157-9.

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VII. TENTATIVE CONCLUSIONS

Meanwhile certain economic achievements of the new republic stand out, which even a lover bitterly undeceived must gladly acknowledge.

First, Russia has led the way to a planned economy; and though her successes and failures in co-ordinated production have been won through something repulsively like serfdom, her example will be studied, let us hope, by individualist societies periodically disabled by the maladjustments of supply and demand, of productive and purchasing power.

Second, she has put an end to unemployment for those who are willing to work in places, under conditions, and for wages, determined by the Government; doubtless it could be ended in any state whose citizens should prove willing to accept such regimentation. A surplus of derelicts remains, but there are derelicts in London and Berlin, in New York and Chicago, too.

Third, a people made lazy and shiftless by long winters, and a brutal exploitation that severed reward from work, have been trained and disciplined to arduous and regular labor—one is not quite certain whether this is an evil or a good.

Fourth, Russia has been advanced, with a celerity unequaled even by Japan, into partnership in the

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Industrial Revolution; her soil is being dotted and lined with factories, railroads, power-stations, oil wells, and coal mines. Morally, industrialization is a questionable boon; practically, it is indispensable to any country that does not wish to be a subject state. Perhaps this Industrial Revolution—the only real revolution in modern history—is all that will remain from the heroic efforts of the Soviets; but even this, achieved without the help of foreign loans, will be an accomplishment without precedent in modern history.

Fifth, Russia has made the first great experiment in coöperative agriculture, though probably in erroneous ways; she has accepted the Industrial Revolution in the fields as all the farmers of the world will have to accept it if agriculture is not to remain a vassal function in an industrial state.

Sixth, and last, and most fundamental of all, Russia has built, in the heat of this experiment, the outlines of a new economic society towards which probably all the industrial world will move. Her communism will pass away, being superior to human capacity; even her socialism will pass away, if it means state ownership and operation of the major means of production. But in so far as Russia keeps, out of the wreckage of theory, government ownership of raw materials and transport, and govern-

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mental control of credit and foreign trade, she will have, despite poverty, despotism and suffering of every kind, a social order which will represent a wholesome union of individualism and socialism, a compromise which one nation after another will accept.

Visibly Germany and Italy, England and America, move towards this settlement of an ancient dispute. For how else can the world keep production going than by appealing to individual ambition? And how else can it check individual greed except by owning the mineral resources of the soil, and laying a regulating hand upon transport and finance? I believe it will turn out in the end that it was for this modest and reasonable Utopia that Russia sweated and bled.

CHAPTER THREE

THE SOUL OF RUSSIA UNDER SOCIALISM

I. CHILDHOOD

ONE might say of the business of perpetuating the species in Russia that like almost everything else there it is carried on *en masse*, as a large-scale enterprise. Forty-three babies per thousand population per year¹—this is the highest birth-rate in what we perhaps unwarrantably call the civilized world. The Soviet has not made up its mind whether to point to this with pride, or to view it with alarm. Suffering from a shortage of labor for its new industries, and threatened on every side with the possibility of war, it desires no lessening of its man-power in the army, the factory or the field; here, as everywhere, it puts much emphasis on quantity, perhaps too little on quality. Therefore it offers no national encouragement to birth control, and retorts to Malthus that a long time must elapse before the pressure of population can outrun the means of subsistence offered by Russia's spacious plains and unexploited soil. The Second Five Year Plan calculates upon a twenty million increase in population in the next five years; which, as a

¹ *Report of the World Population Conference*, London, 1927, p. 172.

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lovable Russian doctor put it, is a heavy assignment for the women.

They do not quite like it, and have rebelled in their own mute and primitive way. Abortion has grown so rapidly that the State has sought to end the high mortality associated with it by bringing it within the law, and as far as possible under the control of state clinics properly equipped. In some places, as at Rostov, the local Soviet has established a birth control museum which explains, in the most intelligible way, those means of limiting the family which obviate the abomination of abortion. Every large city conducts a maternity institute presenting vivid instruction in prenatal, natal and postnatal hygiene. In these matters Russia is making an heroic effort to overtake the world.

Nevertheless, children get born, and it becomes a problem there as elsewhere to find names for them all. Vladimir Lenin is found of some use in this matter: by inversion, dissection and syncopation he provides such names as Vladen and Ninel to inspire their possessors in youth and bewilder them in maturity. If these not quite Christian names seem already too hackneyed, the child, on being baptized into the Revolution, is christened Barricada, Elektrificatsia, or even Diamata—which is to say, Dialectical Materialism.

Having been named, the child must be socialized.

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It must not be allowed to enter too deeply into the hearts of its parents, for that might revive the institution of the family, which is always dying in Russia, and always being reborn. A *crèche* is provided for the infant, whenever possible, at the factory or the collective farm, where the mother may leave it between nursings, and so be free to work for the Government. At the *crèche* which we saw in Moscow—a nursery commodious and clean—tired women came from the nearby factory to give milk to their babes; hurriedly they performed this fairest of all tasks not yet completely stolen from us by the machine, and passed mutely back to their work. For one month before the child is born, and one month afterward, the factory mother is free from work outside her home, and receives her usual wages from the State; thereafter she must return. She brings the infant with her when she reports for work in the morning, nurses it with one breast, and suffers the milk to be drawn from the other breast by a pump, so that the next nursing may be administered without disturbing her toil. In the evening she takes the child home again. Or she may leave it all week at a collective farm associated with the factory, and visit it on week-ends if the maternal feeling remains strong enough to urge her. Sometimes the mothers seemed glad to be freed in these ways from the nuisance of the child; sometimes we thought we caught in their

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eyes a longing for all the old troubles of the private home. The Soviet believes that in another generation this longing will pass away.

Once out of the nursery the child finds many institutions doing their best to take the place of the home. Some of the most luxurious palaces of the old régime are set aside for the vacations of the children; and though the class-rooms can accommodate only seventy per cent of Russia's children, new kindergartens and primary schools open for them every year. For the "educational front" is a main battleground of that war which Russia pictures herself as fighting; the elimination of illiteracy among 160,000,000 people is one of the gigantic tasks of the Soviet. Before the War sixty-four per cent of the Russians were illiterate; by 1930 the percentage had been reduced to thirty-eight. Illiteracy carries with it a dangerous immunity to propaganda, and must be destroyed.

"The object of the Soviet school," says the first article of the official school regulations, "is to train the rising generation in the spirit of communism in order to make its members active participators in the upbuilding of socialism, and in the class struggle of the international proletariat."¹ Here, as in so many other ways, the Soviet has made vigorous use of the methods which its founders and friends complain of

¹ Seibert, p. 191.

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in its foes. For the old generation still hankers after the individualistic life of its remembered youth, and so obstructs perfection; only by forcing a new outlook and a new character upon the coming generations can the communist experiment succeed. Like Plato, the Bolsheviki deliberately ignore and leave behind the old, and will take with them only the young into Utopia.

II. YOUTH

This process of adapting the Russian soul to the Russian State goes on all the more vigorously in the secondary schools. These are almost all technical. Latin and Greek have been put aside, which is good; Roman and Greek civilization is almost totally ignored, which is a questionable bit of pedagogic surgery. World history is taught as a brief and incompetent prelude to the French and the Russian Revolutions; "culture" in the Western sense of the word, as "an acquaintance with the best that mankind has thought or done," and an attempt to live up to that best, is set aside as secondary to the preparation of young communists for the material reconstruction of life. Love is inculcated for all the "workers," hatred for all the middle classes, of the world—as if the middle classes were not the most exploited section of

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every modern community. The emphasis is again on making Soviet patriots first, then technicians and administrators; gentlemen of culture are not in demand. Physical science is encouraged if it promises results in the near future; invention laboratories are supported by many factories and the State; and one of these, the Institute of Plant Industry at Leningrad, has made important discoveries in the cultivation of sub-tropical plants on northern soil.¹ Pure science languishes, and only the quiet work of Pavlov flourishes—partly because Lenin demanded protection for him in his will, partly because his experiments in conditioned reflexes seem to the Communists to offer a biological basis for materialism. Other philosophies than materialism are discountenanced or ignored.

In these secondary schools, as in many of the lower ones, freedom for a time took the place of discipline, and much of the work was done on the Dalton Plan, by which all studies were gathered around a specific task or problem assigned to the student for treatment by his own methods, and at his own time and will. The latest ideas in education were tried out, and the students undertook to organize their own liberty, reserving discipline for their teachers.² Latterly these experiments have ended, and the schools are returning sadly to old methods of study and order. Even so

¹ *New York Times*, Nov. 21, 1932.

² Seibert, p. 189.

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the position of the teachers must be trying to the soul. Not only is their authority undermined by that exaltation of youth against age which characterizes all Russia, and not only must they work with the most primitive equipment and for the most modest salaries; at any moment they may be discharged for failing to keep track of the latest orthodoxy issuing from the Kremlin. On March 26, 1929, the Commissar of Education, Lunacharsky, issued a manifesto to the teachers, warning them that "the believing"—i. e., religious—"teacher in the Soviet school is an awkward contradiction, and departments of popular education are bound to use every opportunity to replace such teachers with new ones of anti-religious sentiments."¹ In 1929-30 hundreds of professors were expelled from their positions, many of them were arrested, and dozens of them were executed, for lack of Communist piety;² the ridiculous Lusk Committee which New York laughed to death in 1922 was by comparison the mildest of Inquisitions. A little while later Lunacharsky, a man of wide culture, was himself dismissed from his post, as insufficiently ardent in the Bolshevizing of education; and a general was put in his place as head of the Russian schools.

In this paradise of enthroned adolescence the most

¹ Chamberlain, pp. 281, 316, 285.

² Seibert, p. 217.

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visible and audible forces are the organizations known as Pioneer Youth and the Young Communists. The Pioneers are children from twelve to sixteen years of age, numbering some two million; they are sworn to communism, to faithful obedience to their communist leaders, and neither to smoke nor to drink nor to swear—they organize parades to teach their fathers temperance. The Young Communists, also numbering over two million, range in age from fourteen to twenty-three; they are the virile youngsters who go out as *udarniki* or "shock-brigaders" to any sagging sector of the "industrial front," and by enthusiastic work overcome the difficulties holding up a job, or set a standard of speed which is then expected of all the working staff. The pride of Russia in its great experiment lingers on most strongly in these boys, who glory in flaunting the banners of the Soviet on every occasion, and consciously constitute the hope of the Revolution.

They are typical of all the new youth of Russia, a youth different by all the sky, as the Romans used to say, from the young men who filled the attics of the Nihilists and the *Narodniki*, or the pages of Dostoievski, Turgeniev and Tolstoi. These orthodox rebels have no use for introspection, mysticism, theory, passivity, or tenderness; they are all for energy, optimism, hardness, initiative and action. They care not a fig for the dying generation and its views, and

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enjoy a thousand forms of insolence to the old. They take to sport with a patriotic fervor now that the Soviet has approved of it; and they prepare themselves ascetically for any task which the State may ask of them.

They are ascetic except in love. For love, in their simple philosophy, is a mistake; when the flesh calls there is, they feel, no reason why its voice should not at once be heard; and any girl who raises difficulties is a bourgeois prig. Love, which in the young is the imaginative idealization of the object in the period of delay between desire and fulfilment, disappeared when delay occurred no more; chastity became, among the Communist youth, a reactionary prejudice, and for a time sex ran such a riot that Sie-mashko, Commissar of Health, confessed that venereal disease "had reached the proportions of a terrible plague."¹

Excesses usually correct themselves if the life is active and the stock is sound. The Communists found that they could not riot by night and work by day; and a new code took form among them according to which it became counter-revolutionary to give much time to the sexual chase. Morals now in Moscow are at least as strict as in Berlin, Paris or New York; the visible relations of the sexes are modest and restrained; the last cabaret has disappeared, and

¹ Lawton, *The Russian Revolution*, p. 238.

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there is no "night life" anywhere. Pornographic incitation is infinitesimal compared with our own exuberant cities; and what we delicately call the "social evil" lingers only in the form of "*valuta* girls" scornful of rubles and devoted to the entertainment of foreigners for strictly foreign currency. A blue strain of Cromwellian Puritanism begins to run through the red rebellion of the Soviet.

With marriage and divorce almost fully free, there is little chance for the supposedly oldest profession to become so well organized a business as in more respectable countries. The law of the Soviet gives to children born out of wedlock the same rights and social standing as to those born within it; and though it begs its citizens to come and register their marriages, it raises no legal objections to unregistered unions. "Free love" is not the exception, it is the rule among the city youth.¹ For a complete legal marriage all that is required is mutual agreement and registration. The word for marriage is no longer *venchatsya*, to wed, but *raspisatsya*, to sign one's name.

III. WOMANHOOD

How do the women enjoy this emancipation, this realization of their wildest dreams? They aspired to

¹ Chamberlain, p. 328.

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legal equality, and it is here; they resented the indissoluble bonds of matrimony, and those bonds have melted away; they were irked by the drudgery of the home, and now they are as free as the men to labor in the factories, to do, indeed, any work that men do, even to run tractors, dig ditches, repair railways, sweep gutters, or lay cobblestones in the street. They do all these things here and there, for they are as strong as the men, and no fancy dress or footwear cripples them for their toil. All the old discriminations, by which woman could own no land in Russia, and passed from the whip of her father to that of her husband and lord, are gone; even the Moslem woman, sharing in Russia that Westernization of manners and dress which has captured Turkey too, and is boring into Persia and Afghanistan, flings aside her veil with timid bravado, and for the first time in centuries looks at the world with a naked face. This revolution in manners is one of the greatest in history, and will doubtless remain when many other innovations of the day have passed away.

Is the liberated woman happy? A young Jewish mother, caught in a moment of intimacy at a bathing place on the Moscow River, thanked her God for the Soviet, which had put an end to the pogroms and disabilities that had harassed her people under the old régime; no hardships now, so equally shared, could

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rival in bitterness those never-to-be-forgotten humiliations. A mother in a factory complained that the new freedom was a triple slavery: freedom to take care of the home, to take care of the children and their father, and to work with the men in the shop; it was still a man's world. The woman finds that her emancipation is chiefly industrialization; that it allows the employer (here the omnivorous State) to pay to the man only such wages as will suffice to support *him* rather than his family; the wife must now go out and earn the other part herself. "The husband," as one wife put it, "is not the provider under our present-day conditions."¹ In short, the Russian woman, like her mate, is on the verge of discovering that we are all born unfree and unequal: individually, sexually, racially unequal; economically, biologically unfree, subjected to physiological functions and economic necessities. How many delusions modernity must unlearn!

Of all groups in Russia the women have made the greatest advances, and seem destined to the severest disillusionments. Free Love operates to their detriment, since they lose their attractiveness and vigor sooner than the men; and free divorce leaves no great difference between marriage and free love. For divorce may be had even more easily than marriage; mar-

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 377.

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riage requires the consent and signature of two, divorce needs only the consent and signature of one.¹ Here in the marriage bureau a couple comes to marry; it takes them some time; here, soon after, a young husband comes for a divorce; he makes his statement, signs his name, and in a moment is free. To his wife a postal is sent, informing her that she too now has again this strange, novel thing called freedom. If there are children each parent must share in their support; if the wife is unemployed the husband must provide for her; if the husband is out of work the employed wife who divorces him must contribute to his maintenance.

This easy law of divorce, founded on so youthful an ignorance of biology and history, has had to be abandoned, or, less honestly, "interpreted" into some measure of adaptability to sexual differences and human limitations. The courts soon reported to the jejune lawmakers that some men had married three times within three months;² that crafty peasants had found a way of avoiding the tax on hired labor by marrying a strong wife in the spring, when work was to be done, and divorcing her in the fall, when the harvest was in;³ and that throughout the Soviet

¹ *Soviet Law of Marriage*, Moscow, 1931, p. 15.

² Feiler, A., *The Russian Experiment*, New York, 1930, p. 229.

³ *Ibid.*, Chamberlain, p. 382

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Union men were marrying and divorcing on the principle of short-term investments properly diversified, rather than with a view to permanent and faithful unions. The judges created an impromptu brake by raising the alimony payments, and by making it a punishable offense if a man could be proved to have married and divorced a wife merely to have his pleasure. Within a generation, probably, the divorce laws of Russia will not differ materially from those of the rest of the world.

The thorough-going Communist has of necessity declared war upon the family and the home; he knows that these are the richest sources and the most persistent nests of those individualistic impulses which must be destroyed if communism is to survive. Therefore he attacks the family relentlessly, by providing institutions for the communal care of children, by strengthening the young against parental authority, by putting an end to Sunday and to religion, by encouraging restaurants, communal kitchens and "kitchen-factories" (where prepared meals may be bought and taken away), and by herding the peasants into collectives and the workers into clubs. Home life is made almost impossible by overcrowding. In Moscow in 1930 there were four families for every three rooms; in 1929 the average floor space was some seven feet square; in some rooms

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a chalk-line on the floor defined the boundaries of each person's dwelling.¹ One Russian professor, describing his domain to an American professor, remarked that though by occupation an historian, he was rapidly becoming an entomologist through study of the various species of life that crawled over his fraction of the wall. Conceive the happiness of a student in these holes, or the fretted spirit of any sensitive soul longing for the healing quiet of privacy and solitude. Under such conditions none but the coarse can survive.

The Soviet hopes that by 1933 all its citizens will eat in communal kitchens; but the people obdurately prefer, as yet, their little share of the kitchen stove, or the smelly kerosene *primus* in their corners, and the modest meals that they can cook by themselves according to their shamefully individual tastes. Meanwhile Moscow has done far less for its people, in housing, clothing or food, during the last decade, than the major cities of western Europe and America. Rents are lower for those whose incomes are low, but often the space is not to be had; and this beneficent principle of adjusting rentals to capacity to pay is seldom applied to the modern apartment-houses which are slowly rising in Moscow, and which, as the poorer workers complain, are usually monopo-

¹ Eckardt, H. von, *Russia*, New York, 1931, p. 512; Seibert, pp. 180-1.

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lized by the more highly paid employees of the State.¹

All the artistry and resources that Russia could find for building have been lavished upon the clubs. To these she would lure the workers in their leisure hours, rather than have them retire to those apartments and homes which to the Soviet are focal infections poisoning with individualism the communistic state. For if the worker comes to the club the State can know what he is doing, what he reads and says, and who are his associates; at the club it can reach him once more with the radio, and form him with propaganda and selected news into a being nearer to its heart's desire.

Domus delenda est—the home must be destroyed; this is the inevitable motto of communism as it is being built into the Russian soul. Why women should go through the pains of childbirth to bear children whom they will hardly ever see, who will bring them no spiritual solace and no economic reward, and who will be trained away from them into some mould determined by the state—this is a question apparently not asked by the statesmen of the Soviet. With a birth rate of forty-three per thousand one can afford a few experiments.

¹ Chamberlain, p. 46.

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IV. MATURITY

What is the life of the mind in this society?

Again it is rich in quantity, not quite so rich in quality. At every turn the citizen has opportunities, but the instruction is narrow in scope, superficial in substance, and maddeningly monotonous. Here is the *Rabfac*, or Workers' School, ready to train young men to be technicians; here is the radio, shouting a raucous speech from the Kremlin throne; here are 22,000,000 newspapers flooding Russia every day, all singing the same song, all written in effect by the same pen, all telling the same grandiose story of a factory built, an oil well sunk, a power station opened, a river spanned with a bridge. Since the new order depends upon propaganda without end, the press is even more important than the army; it is the invisible policeman of the Soviet, the indispensable regimenter of the mind.

Frequently these papers criticize the details of communist life; never do they criticize the system itself. Men and women everywhere are invited to report to the press any case of incompetent or dishonest functioning in an employee of the State; but if one should dare to criticize the State itself, or communism or socialism, his criticism would never see the light, nor perhaps would *he* ever see the light

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again. This "self-criticism" has bred a vast number of secret informers, who circulate by the hundred thousand unrecognizably everywhere, and add one more terror to Russian life; at any moment the worker may find himself pilloried in the press for some heresy or negligence. Judge the popularity of these informers from their death rate; angry villagers killed twenty-four of them within four months. No member of the Communist Party (or, as we should say, of the Organization) is made the object of such criticism, unless he has been marked for destruction by the ruling clique.¹ When the veteran Trotsky was scheduled by Stalin for a fall, the press rang with denunciations of him in every second column, but not one paper would print his defense until it was too late. For more than a year Rykov, though holding a high place in the Soviet, was refused any opportunity to write a word in the press to explain his disapproval of Stalin's plans. Today it is the same story with Zinoviev and Kamenev.

Very little appears in these papers about any foreign nation; and almost nothing about the intellectual life of the outside world, except for its socialist literature, and the insincere superficialities of Bernard Shaw, whose personally escorted tour of Moscow, under hermetically sealed conditions, is the joke of all the informed. This spiritual encirclement

¹ Seibert, pp. 251, 255.

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of the Russian mind is made more complete by state control of publishing. Russia leads the world in the number of volumes issued from its presses every year, but the author of all of them is that incredible octopus, the Soviet. Fifty per cent of the books are plain propaganda: the life and works of Lenin, the life and works of Stalin, the life and works of Marx, the life and works of Engels. . . . Much of the remainder consists of technical volumes aiming to turn the young Russian into an engineer. For just as the State drove out the *kulaks* and their knowledge from the farms, so the State, in its early enthusiasm, drove out the technicians from Russia by announcing equal wages for all. Now it must repent without leisure by paying heavy bribes to imported specialists, and sacrificing all cultural education in its own people in order to produce a million technicians in a decade. It is to be expected that under such circumstances Russian literature will lack the depth, the subtlety and the tenderness which made it one of the glories of the nineteenth century. Everything has to be paid for, especially revolutions.

Those old authors who made Russia known to the world, and prepared the way for the perfect state, are the insulted and injured of today. Dostoievski is damned with ever fainter praise—how could a Communist forgive him for *The Possessed*? Tolstoi's birth-place is still used as a lure for *valuta*, but his

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works are in disrepute because he spoke of religion, and hated conscription and the state. Turgenev is smiled upon as a stylist who did not understand that a work of art must be judged not by its form but by its politics. The Marxian theory of criticism holds the stage in Russia; it is not beauty or artistry that counts, but correct doctrine. "Literature," says one critic, "is for us a weapon of political education"; "a critic," says another, "is not a man of learning, but a fighter, who must tear the mask from the face of the class enemy."¹ Literature is an annex to the army.

Hence censorship is of the essence of the Soviet. Every book, before graduating into print, must secure the approval of *Glavlit*, the Central Book Department of the State; and no imported book, newspaper or magazine can find its way to the public until *Glavlit* has circumcised it into the faith.² Writers may at any time be accused of heresy, denounced to the police, and dragged to a public or secret trial.³ Only such foreign authors—and only such parts of them—are translated as denounce Europe and America and uphold the socialist point of view. Even the poets are kept under strict surveillance by the Repertory Committee, which forbade

¹ Chamberlain, p. 300.

² Seibert, p. 239.

³ Eckardt, p. 578.

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Lobengrin as religious, Schiller's *Mary Stuart* as monarchistic, and Tschaikowsky's *Evgenyi Onyegin* as depicting idyllic relations between the peasants and the landlords. Some authors, after trying hard to obey all the rules, find the despotism too stifling, and kill themselves; instance Sobol, Mayakovsky, and Essenine. The last, a lyric devotee of passion and beauty, took refuge from the Soviet first in alcohol, then in Isidora Duncan, then in death; he wrote his final poem in his own blood, and then hanged himself, as if to prove that Russia can still provide materials for a Dostoievski.

The drama in Russia still flourishes, for its tradition of excellence was too strong to be readily destroyed. The number of those who attend the theatre, like the number of those who read books, is much greater than before; and there is no doubt that the Soviet, like every Westernizing state, has spread popular enlightenment in a cautious way, and has brought a certain orthodox *proletkultur* to millions who were mentally disfranchised under the Tsars. Thirty thousand groups have been formed for amateur theatricals; and the Five Year Plan characteristically calls for raising this number to 469,000 by 1933.

The Moscow Art Theatre sought to survive the flood by adapting itself to the mood of the Revolution; it passed quickly from the quiet tenor of

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Tchekov to violent plays like *Armored Train* 14-69; its actors tried to forget Stanislavsky, and substituted unrestrained action for that restrained art which conveys to mature minds the intense sense of unexploited powers. Meyerhold caught the fancy of young rebels of every stage and nation by banishing curtains, footlights, elaborate costumes, and everything traditionally used to create theatrical illusion; he shifted scenes before the audience, and presented backgrounds of pulleys and wheels, ladders and scaffolding, as a symbol of his great desire to be in the revolutionary surge. But all communists except those who have never seen them are getting tired of his antics now; the workers complain that they are given free passes to Meyerhold's acrobats, but not to those performances at the Art Theatre which the better paid employees of the Soviet prefer to attend. One suspects that the much-ado about the Russian stage under the Revolution will turn out, like so much of the heat from the East, to be a flurry mostly composed of wind. For here too the censor wields his desiccating wand; every play must lead to communist conclusions, old plays are revised ruthlessly to this end, and the upshot of many a drama is that one must buy more state bonds. Dramas attacking the Russian social order, comparable to those that in America attack our profit system to such profit, and with such popularity and freedom, would no more

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be tolerated on the Russian stage than such literary attacks as those made here by Sinclair Lewis and Upton Sinclair would be countenanced by the literary censorship. These vigorous authors are popular in Russia; but if they were Russians in Russia they would have to break their pens or move to Siberia.

The great Opera House still stands, half concealed with repair-scaffoldings on which no one ever seems to work; but the world leadership that it once held is gone. It is a pleasant sight to see workers, dressed in their simple caps and blouses, occupying the pit at the opera; every class must have its turn. But Chaliapin has fled from a country which distrusts exceptional men, Rachmaninof takes refuge sadly in New York, and Stravinsky and Prokofief like the climate of France. The ballet is dying, as all forms of art must some time do; opera too will languish under a régime that does not care for unreal emotions, fine trappings and lavish displays. One could put up with such mortality, for these art-forms belong to another age than ours, and no longer express us; but even the folk-songs of Russia, which endeared her, and brought her longings, to the world, are dying out; one hears them everywhere except under the Soviet. It would be well if they had died because happier songs had taken their place; but the happier songs have not come. Apparently Russia cannot find

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it in its heart to sing today, except in choral groups artificially generated by the State.

Doubtless all the arts must seek new forms for this new age. The old forms were adapted to a leisurely aristocratic society, which liked to sit in its frills for portraits, and liked to sit in its frills before operas and plays. Today life rushes on too hurriedly for such dallying. The fluidity and inter-communication of classes levels standards and tastes, the camera replaces the painter, the cinema replaces the opera and the stage; democracy and the machine will have their way, and write their will upon every institution and every art.

Again it is refreshing to see Russians coming in their underwear to view the pictures in the famous Tretyakoff Gallery, now enriched by the expropriation of a hundred private collections. But one smiles to find that the pictures have been rearranged in "Marxian order" to show the class influences behind them, while each canvas is judged by its political "message," and the guide dismisses certain pictures as "without social significance"—meaning that they are therefore bad art. The esthetic treasures of the new society are various portraits and groups of Lenin and his associates, dressed like navvies to please the supposedly sovereign proletaires, and all made to look as much as possible like first-class ruffians. The real galleries of Russia today are the Museums of the

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Revolution, where photos replace paintings, and placards convey with heavy explicitness meanings that would once have been made to flash out from a living countenance penetratingly portrayed. Posters abound, and are supreme in their kind, for they are among the heralds and town-criers of their time; but they too begin to deteriorate through the pressure to uniformity; it is not given to man to preach the same sermon with inspiration forever. Even the architecture reflects the flagging spirit of a people that just begins to suspect itself; these bizarre atrocities seem to shrink from comparison with the palaces and cathedrals of an older day. The Soviet has tried to recapture the medieval spirit of a communal art, but it has failed. For medieval artists and artisans were free individuals; the Russian worker, even the Russian artist, is a slave.

V. LIBERTY

Liberty is the last thing which one should look for in Russia, for it was among the first casualties of the Revolution. From the Tsarist *Okbrana* to the *Tcheka* and the G.P.U. the succession has been lineal and continuous; this Westernizing state is still an Oriental despotism, based on spies and fear. The security which the new system hoped to bring to its

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people, and because of which they might free themselves from the old lust for getting and hoarding wealth against unlucky days, is but another of the many Russian myths; never did a people feel so insecure in life and liberty, in body and soul. For everywhere is the spy. It is a crime not to report observed activities in any way hostile to the state;¹ and no one can be sure that his own brother will not betray him, or even that his own brother is not a paid agent of the dreaded secret police. At every meal one hears the warning, "Take care, don't speak so loudly, some one may hear." We laughed at these precautions, but we found out later that we too had been honored with spies. No Russian will talk freely except under conditions of almost absolute privacy; few Russians even then; and the Jews, though they are liberated, dare not speak in their own language to foreigners lest they be suspected by the agents that may be lurking about. At any time any citizen of Russia may be arrested—often in the middle of the night—with no reason given to him, nor any explanation to his relatives;² he may be secluded without communication, and condemned by a secret trial; he may be exiled, imprisoned, or shot, without any word ever coming to his friends about his fate.

Here, for example, is Sonia, the maid; she enters one morning weeping; the husband of the woman

¹ Hopper, p. 139.

² *Ibid.*

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with whom she shares a room has disappeared, and has not been heard from for three days. A friend has just reported clandestinely to the wife that the man was arrested for wishing, too loudly, that Stalin himself might be made to eat the meal which the factory authorities had thought good enough for their men. All the household, we are told, is in tears; no one can say if the man will ever come back to it again.

Deportations are more frequent today than at any time under the Tsars. "No one," says Chamberlain, the impeccably reliable Russian correspondent of *The Christian Science Monitor*, "has ever been able to secure any official statistics regarding the number of persons who are in prison or in exile for political offenses in the Soviet Union; but the free use which the G.P.U. makes of its sweeping powers of arrest makes it certain that this figure is one of the highest in the world."¹ The civil liberties for which centuries of Europeans have written, spoken, fought and bled—freedom of speech, of press, of worship, of assembly, and of political organization, *habeas corpus*, public trial by jury, and other legal protections against arbitrary search, arrest and condemnation—these basic rights, the very life-stream or vital medium of civilization, find no place in this Revolution which fought so nobly for freedom. They are part of the heavy price Russia has had to pay for

¹ P. 388.

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breaking the continuity of her historic life and trying to leap over centuries.

Do the Russians miss this freedom whose utter absence so repels any man bred on Voltaire and Jefferson? Certainly not as much as an Englishman would, or a Frenchman, or an American. Most of these liberties have never existed in Russia, though they were ampler under the Tsars than now;¹ and if a native soul mourns for them it is not through the sudden withdrawal of an accustomed freedom, but with the disillusionment of shattered dreams. How long these poor Russians, from Pugatchev to Kropotkin, dreamed of liberty! And even if they appreciate the good things which the Revolution has brought to them—the spread of education, the emancipation of woman, the shortening of the working day, the liberation from a superstitious and obscurantist church—there is nevertheless a gloom in their faces, a weary sadness in their eyes, which tells how fondly they had hoped for a finer and freer life than this grey plodding towards a dawn which may never be. Many of them look always frightened, nearly all of them are cheerless and irritable, some seem actually haggard with worry and fear. All attempts to make the community happy have failed.²

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 397; Calvin Hoover, p. 10.

² Fülöp-Miller, R., *The Mind and Face of Bolshevism*, New York, 1927, p. 272.

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The uproarious festivals of the old days are gone; the people do not chatter as before, and they do not sing.

This, faithfully described by one prejudiced in favor of liberty, is the Russia that we saw; the Russia from which we fled before time because we could not bear any longer the sight of a brave nation so lately freed and so soon flung back into chains. May we never see so unhappy a people again.

VI. OLD AGE

Imagine the old in such a régime. If they are too weak to work they are kept from starvation by a modest pension; in other respects they are derelicts. That conflict between fathers and sons which Turgeniev celebrated, and which makes every age a troubled transition, is here sharper than anywhere, for the young have been taught to despise the old,¹ to look upon them as minds poisoned by corrupt institutions and ancient superstitions; the function of the young in Russia is to teach and bring up their elders. In every dispute the young are right, for the young are (for the occasion) communists, and the old are by hypothesis reactionaries. Parental authority is frowned upon, for it is a prop of the family, and the family must be destroyed.

¹ Seibert, p. 190.

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But the great tragedy of the older generation in Russia appears not in the pious mothers who look with horror upon the atheism of their sons, nor in the "dark" peasants whose children smile down in superiority upon them, nor in the old landlords, manufacturers, traders and priests, who are shut out not only from the polls but from the coöperative stores, and starve unless they can find money with which to meet the ten times higher prices of the open market; and again the great tragedy is not in the surviving aristocrats who linger here and there in menial positions as maids and servants in the new state, playing turn about with all the poetic justice and irony of history; nor in those bitter *émigrés* who mourn the death of Russian civilization and culture as they knew it, but cannot think except in futile terms of restoration. The profoundest tragedy of all is in the intellectuals of the old régime, men who were exiled from Russia by the Tsar, returned for a brief triumph in 1917, and are now exiled, or outcast, even more ruthlessly, again.

What did not these men sacrifice for their dream? Liberty, wealth, family, love—many of them gave all that they had in material and spiritual goods to have only this luxury, the exaltation of preparing for the Revolution. Now it is here, and like Truth long pursued and at last, in fancy, found, it is not as beautiful as it had appeared to them in their dreams;

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they had never thought that it could be so terrible. They look with sorrow upon the coarse faces that inhabit the Kremlin, that crowd the old palaces and dominate the streets; they had not meant to destroy all the graces and comforts, all the refinements and amenities of the old life, nor to raise to such omnipotence what must now seem to them merely the kings of the mob. They protest, and are told that they are only idle dreamers, unnecessary in a time that calls for merciless and decisive action. If they continue to protest they find themselves once more in Siberia. Thousands of them are there again, as the wheel comes full circle in this classically constructed drama; one by one they return to the darkness and exile from which they came. And symbol and summit of them all, Trotsky, who fought like a lion to save the Revolution, eats his soul out, like a chained Prometheus, on his prison isle, while death creeps upon him daily through an ulcerated stomach and a spasmodic heart.¹ Euripides would have been saddened and pleased by so perfect a tragedy.

Death relieves them, for no orthodoxy can deter it, and it consumes in its quiet reaping radical and conservative, rebel and emperor, victor and victim, alike. But when it comes to Russians now it comes in all its terror and certainty, for no *viaticum* sanctifies it, and no hope of heaven makes it seem like a

¹ Levine, I. D., *Stalin*, New York, 1931, p. 400.

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door opening to a finer life. Death under the Soviets is without benefit of clergy; religion is dying, and heaven must be on earth or nowhere. Only the very old are a little comforted by the echoes of old hopes; the others must face extinction stoically, believing that the rest is silence.

One hundred years ago a young Frenchman foresaw all this, and described its final tragedy with a sentimentality forgivable in one who had suffered like Alfred de Musset. In 1835 he wrote as follows, at the outset of his *Confessions of a Young Man of the Century*:¹

The antagonists of Christ therefore said to the poor: "You wait patiently for this day of justice—there is no justice; you wait for the life eternal to achieve your vengeance—there is no life eternal; you gather up your tears and those of your family, the cries of children and the sounds of women, to place them at the feet of God at the hour of death—there is no God."

Then it is certain that the poor man dried his tears, that he told his wife to check her sobs, his children to come with him, and that he stood upon the earth with the power of a bull. He said to the rich: "Thou who oppressest me, thou art only man"; and to the priest, "Thou who hast consoled me, thou hast lied." That was just what the antagonists of Christ desired. Perhaps they thought that this was the way to achieve

¹ New York, 1908, pp. 21-22.

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man's happiness, sending him out to the conquest of liberty.

But if the poor man, once satisfied that the priest deceived him, that the rich robbed him, that all men have rights, that all good is of this world, and that misery is impiety; if the poor man, believing in himself and in his two arms, says to himself one fine day: "War on the rich! For me, happiness here in this life, since there is no other! For me, the earth, since heaven is empty! For me and for all, since all are equal!"—O reasoners sublime who have led him to this, *what will you say to him if he is conquered?*

CHAPTER FOUR

THE RELIGIOUS REVOLUTION

I. WHY MEN ARE RELIGIOUS

DOSTOIEVSKI remarked—in that powerful and prophetic masterpiece, *The Possessed*—that if a revolution were to succeed in Russia it must begin by destroying religion.

Four elemental revolutions are in operation in Russia today: the industrial, the economic, the political, the religious; the passage from medieval agriculture to modern industry, from private property to government ownership, from monarchy to dictatorship, from Christianity to atheism. The first is the most profound, being parent of the rest; the second is the most transitory, being contrary to the nature of men; the third is the most superficial, since all the old forms remain; the fourth is the most astonishing and fascinating, since it is an attempt, on a scale unknown in history, to achieve an apparently impossible transformation.

For neither industrialism nor property, neither monarchy nor dictatorship, is as old as religion; and none of them has its roots so deep in the soul of man. Many efforts have been made to destroy it,

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but it has only changed form, it has never died. It has deceived its enemies in the very hour of their triumph, by being reborn, under their eyes, out of their own necessities. Buddha laughed at all deities, and became a god; the Sophists and Socrates, Democritus and Epicurus, laughed Zeus to death, while the Orphic mysteries captured Greece; Caesar smiled sceptically as he played *pontifex maximus* at the altar of a dead Jove, while a Roman province prepared for the coming of Christ.

What is the cause of the indestructibility of religion? This—that no one has yet found a substitute for the functions which it has fulfilled in the life of men. These functions are partly mental, partly moral. Religion has offered to man a means of completing, by imagination and hypothesis, a world picture left disjointed and fragmentary by knowledge and science; it has quieted his curiosity, solaced his solitude, and comforted him in his fear of the unknown; it has redeemed the hard prose and routine of his existence with the poetry of the sacraments and the ritual of the mass; it has composed a divine drama of creation, suffering and redemption, through which the individual career, otherwise so trivial and brief, took on proportions and significance of an epic scope, embracing eternity; it has conceived a life beyond the grave so infinitely more enduring

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than our earthly stay that death lost something of its terror, and poverty something of its sting.

But while doing all this for the individual, religion has done even more for the state: it has added moral sanctions to mental peace. It has deepened the sense of right and wrong by giving to morals an emotional and supernatural basis of divine surveillance, punishment and reward; it has, by its support and its exhortations, strengthened the social instincts against the individualistic instincts, and thereby helped to stabilize society; and it has given to nations, sometimes to continents, the cementing unity of one moral code and one creed. Hence statesmen have courted and favored it, and even proud rulers like Ashoka and Hideyoshi, Constantine and Peter, Napoleon and Mussolini made peace with it lest the order forged by their arms should be undone by loosened morals or the clash of faiths.

These are the functions of religion. It has survived because no other force has been able to perform them. It was rejected by the French Revolution, and is today the basis of the French state: Paris can afford to be sceptical, because the peasant believes. It is rejected by the Russian Revolution, outlawed, insulted and scorned in a thousand ways. Will Russia succeed in destroying it?

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II. RELIGION UNDER THE TSARS

But let us distinguish. Religion cannot be destroyed; a religion can. What if the old religion of Russia called for a destroyer?

Christianity came to Russia from Byzantium—Constantinople—in 988 A. D., at a time when western Europe was awaiting the end of the world. It found a simple peasantry, not very different from that which the traveler finds in the remoter villages today: men primitive, unlettered, timid, superstitious, kindly, brutal and strong; women industrious, ignorant, powerful, obedient and oppressed. Russian Christianity absorbed into itself the magic and ritual of the barbaric faiths that had preceded it on the scene. When the Eastern or Greek Church separated from the Western or Roman Church in 1054, Russian Christianity became independent, and developed, under the protection of the Tsars, into an Oriental ritual unique and colorful, resounding with deep chaunts and prayers, glorifying the life of the peasant with drama and pageantry, and lifting the slave of the soil for a miraculous moment into ecstatic intimacy with God.

The Russian Church became powerful because the Tsars found it useful. The State made it rich, and in gratitude it helped to keep the peasant poor. It

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taught to the peasant a faith full of manufactured miracles, it made tears flow from the eyes of saints long dead, and showed ancient martyrs divinely preserved from the corruption of the flesh. It preached the nobility of suffering and silent obedience, and promised compensatory delicacies in the sky. It discouraged education and thought, and encouraged racial divisions and hate. In one pogrom, at Kiev in 1905, orthodox followers of the Church destroyed eighteen hundred Jewish homes, and slaughtered men and women piously; when it was over, the confessionals of the state Church cleansed away all the taint of sin and blood. The priest of the village was a kindly man, and loved his flock almost as much as his table; but the hierarchy loved the Tsar, made the confessional an instrument of espionage, and saved the cost of many policemen. The Church became venal and arrogant, immoral and corrupt.

The people clung to it nevertheless, precisely as the poor of the world cling to the Utopia of communism today, because they had no other hope, nothing else to turn to in their poverty and despair. Life, they felt, was hard, but it was not long; if one bore with it patiently for a few years, eternal riches and unspeakable happiness would come in the sky; the *muzhik* would be a *boyar* baron there forever, and like Lazarus he would, in his sadistic

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mercy, let fall a drop of water, from his heavenly haven, upon the burning tongues of the damned rich in hell. Indeed, the state Church could not quite satisfy the peasant's dream of the other world, or his desire for a mental anesthesia in this one; he made for himself new religions, weird heresies and sects, whereby he might enjoy, in cheap imagination, all those acquisitive and lecherous impulses which he was too virtuous, or too poor, to indulge on the earth.

So it was in the village; but in the towns, here and there, the oppressed proletaire ceased to attend services, read Darwin and Huxley, Spencer and Marx, and swore vengeance against the Church of his fathers and his masters. The machine in the factory not only enslaved his body, it also enslaved his mind; soon he suffered a kind of diseased hallucination in which he saw himself, and his children, and the whole universe, as machines, all caught in an iron chain of mechanical cause and effect. Man became a creature composed of heredity and environment, made in the image and likeness of cogs and pulleys, levers and wheels. The revolutionary proletariat declared war on both state and church, and not only on the state Church, but on all religion as well. The city intellectuals hesitated, and tried for a while to follow the confused and theatrical idealism of Tolstoi; but in the end they, too, decided

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that God was dead, and that the jig was up with Christianity. Even Dostoievski, who so publicly wanted to be a saint, secretly preferred to be a gambler; he preached like Alyosha, acted like Mitya, and believed like Ivan.

III. THE CHURCH AND THE SOVIET

When the Revolution came, both the Church and the Soviet knew that it must be, for them, a fight to the death. Horrified at the thought of losing its state subsidies, the Church decreed the excommunication of all who aided the Communist cause; and Tikhon, Patriarch of Moscow, openly worked for the restoration of the Tsar. The Soviet at first contented itself with ending all state support of the Church; religion was to be left free, but it would have to derive its funds, as in America, directly from the people. The original Constitution of the Russian Socialist Federation of Soviet Republics was liberal enough; by Article V, "freedom for religious and anti-religious propaganda is recognized for all citizens." Tikhon resisted, was exiled, retracted, was pardoned, retired to a distant monastery, and died. The unifying force of state control having been withdrawn, the Church split into a dozen sects, and new heresies flourished as never before. A "Living Church" was

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formed, of those Christians who held that Christianity and communism were in essential accord, and should support one another. For a time the war against religion stimulated religion; the peasants, and the older people of the cities, whispered among themselves that Antichrist had come in the person of Lenin, and that the end of the world was at hand.¹

Under these excited conditions the Soviet discovered that religion still survived, and was taking a hundred forms disagreeable to sophistication and difficult to control. Gradually it stiffened the decrees affecting the Church: the Constitution was slyly amended to read that "freedom for religious *confession* and anti-religious propaganda is recognized for all citizens"; religious publications and religious instruction of persons under eighteen were made illegal; all philanthropic, educational, social or practical activities were forbidden to religious groups; all "special meetings for children, youths and women for prayer purposes," all literary or needle work, all "excursions, libraries, reading rooms, and sanatoria" conducted by religious organizations were prohibited. All ecclesiastical property was nationalized, but persons above the age of eighteen were free to form religious associations, and to use such churches as their following might require.

¹ Eddy, Sherwood, *The Challenge of Russia*, New York, 1930, p. 157; Fülöp-Miller, p. 249.

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The enforcement of these decrees was thorough and merciless, and yet they encountered no great popular resistance. Churches which could show a substantial attendance were left open; the others were closed. In 1932, out of fourteen hundred pre-War churches in Moscow, four hundred were open (including two synagogues), four hundred were shut and barred; the rest had been abandoned, torn down or transformed. Some were changed into theatres, others into store-houses, garages, plumbers' shops, Soviet meeting-rooms, headquarters for the local atheist league, etc. The monasteries were closed, and the monks were put to work. The shrines that had dotted Russia, as the goals of pious pilgrimages, were dismantled, and at last the famous statue of the Iberian Virgin, at the approach to the Red Square, was taken down from its high niche, and the space which it had adorned was filled with dreary brick. When the famine of 1921 came, the Soviet confiscated all such treasures of the Church as it could find, and sold them for public relief. As all printing-offices were in the hands of the Government, the publication of the Bible came to an end.

The clergy found themselves suddenly flung into secular life, and those who had no flocks had to find work or starve. Dependent for funds upon an impoverished people which hoards every ruble, the priesthood is dying out; a priest on the streets is a

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sight seldom seen. No seminaries are permitted; few candidates present themselves for the priesthood, and of these one or two are saints while the rest are paupers without education. The clergy have no vote, no civic rights; they must not use the mails, or the telegraph, or the telephone; they are excluded from state medical aid, which is given free (such as there is of it) to all citizens; they are subjected to high taxation, and are charged high rentals for their living quarters; and their children are not admitted to the universities. When a priest becomes influential he is removed to Siberia; the number of clergymen imprisoned or deported is beyond reckoning.¹

Meanwhile the pent-up hatred of the organized proletariat against the Church of their masters broke out in an unrestrained anti-religious campaign. Three million militant atheists banded themselves together under the name of *Byezbozhniki*, or "Men without a God." Their magazine, *The Godless*, acquired a circulation in the millions. It is to be found everywhere; its posters and cartoons stare the traveler in the face at every turn. One poster pictured God, Allah and Jehovah adding to the Decalogue by announcing: "A new commandment I give unto you: Subscribe to *The Godless*." On the cover of one issue a Young Communist, recently admitted to Paradise, is shown causing uproarious hilarity among the gods

¹ Eckardt, p. 538.

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by reading to them an issue of the magazine. The *Byezbozhniki* were one source of a very Mississippi of atheist essays, poems, dramas, novels; and they were the organizing spirits behind the "Red Masses" which, at Easter and Christmas, mocked the ancient feasts with farcical processions and ritual, to the delight of the urchins in the streets. At Easter, in 1924, 150,000 people joined in such a Red Mass at Leningrad—almost one-sixth of the population; *Pravda*, organ of the Communist Party, called it a real Triumph of Reason. In these mock masses rogues dressed as priests sang *risqué* songs to the tune of pious hymns; sometimes the tune itself was amended by the sudden interpolation of strains from revolutionary anthems, or from some obscene street ballad.¹ At the close of the Red Mass figures of God, Christ, Buddha and Allah were reviled, torn to pieces, and publicly burned. Religious Jews united with Christians to protect one another from such demonstrations; Christian workingmen defended the synagogue at Ekaterinoslav from assaults by Communists in 1924, and the Jews in turn guarded the Russian Easter procession from attack.

These anti-religious demonstrations subsided in later years; it was as if all the people, pious or atheist, felt themselves united in one tragedy of destitution, and had no energy left for theological hate. But the

¹ Fülöp-Miller, pp. 190-1.

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State campaign against religion went on. Stalin announced that any Communist who did not oppose religion should be expelled from the Communist Party. Every school taught atheism vigorously. Five thousand "shock brigades" of militant atheists were formed to bring the new gospel to the provinces; soon they announced that four hundred collective farms had been rid of all religion. Playing-cards were made which exposed, by merciless cartoons, the chicanery and corruption of the old state Church. Not a stone was left unturned in the effort to tear down the ancient edifice of supernatural belief.

IV. AN ECCLESIASTICAL TOUR OF INSPECTION

So much is history; but what of today?

On August 13th, 1932, Mr. Ralph Barnes, the brilliant Moscow representative of the New York *Herald-Tribune*, joined me in an effort to see for ourselves the condition of religion in the Russian capital. Before starting out I walked to the Red Square and copied the famous quotation from Marx which some zealot had inscribed in large letters on a building opposite the shrine of the Iberian Virgin: *Religia Opium dlia Naroda*—"Religion is the Opium of the People." A moment later I discovered that the pen with which I had transcribed the legend had

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been stolen from my pocket, indicating a certain value in opium.

As taxis are rare in Moscow, we hired one of the cars of the Metropole Hotel. The driver, while we rode towards our first destination, pointed out church after church that was closed and barred, and remarked laconically, "*Zakrit*"—shut. Round these closed shrines, beautiful even in their decay, people moved about their affairs, and children played, without visible interest in this ecclesiastical desolation.

We were surprised to find the first church on our visiting list well filled with worshipers listening piously to a simple ceremony of song and prayer. At the altar an old priest wailed, in a matter-of-fact voice, the traditional ritual, punctuated repeatedly with the phrase, "*Slavobog*"—Glory to God; apparently it is not misfortune but prosperity that destroys faith. Another priest took up the burden, intoning a prayer with the artificial pathos of an American politician. In the eyes of the acolytes a fever of fervor showed, such as comes to people whose errors are dignified with persecution. Crouched in a window-sill, an old woman, haggard and in rags, repeated ecstatically some sacred formula, as if she had seen the risen Christ. There was no visible interference of the State with this desire of the old to worship in the manner of their fathers; no police could be seen, no hostile curiosity, no youthful

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ridicule. The congregation numbered some two hundred; nearly all were above thirty; the rest were women and girls. The attendance seemed large enough, until we reflected that it was composed of the flocks of some twenty neighboring churches that had been closed; and the evening was one of special sanctity in the calendar of the Church. I felt that I was witnessing the death-agonies of an ancient institution; that I had broken in upon the last moments of an old courtesan, whose sins and meretricious splendor could be forgiven her now that she was safely dead.

That night we visited some twenty churches. Twelve were closed, eight were open, five of these eight were empty. One of the remaining three had a flock of twenty souls, who called themselves "Old Believers"; under a dim light an old woman, in soiled black shawl and skirt, read the prayers for the little congregation. Outside the church a group of young men gathered excitedly around a stalled motor—the new god of the machine had come to earth. Behind the church a young girl was driving a tractor across a field. Overhead a plane hummed. In a nearby building a radio preached a Communist sermon from the Holy Office of the Propaganda in the Kremlin. Motor, radio, tractor, plane—they seemed to be symbols of that Industrial Revolution, that triumph of machinery, which was the real slayer of the old

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faith. A new god had come, and must have his day.

A week later I visited the Anti-Religious Museum in the Strasnaya Ploshchad. It too was housed in a church, at whose doors the busy atheist could now sip horrible mineral water (*Essentuki*), or only less horrible beer. Within, as in some weird Eden Museum, were ranged exhibits, statuary, paintings, photos and charts, revealing the superstitions and barbarities of the Russian Church, and the growth of militant atheism under the Soviet. The technique of miracles was expounded, and dead mice were shown which, like some saints, had been preserved in all their flesh by being caught in some dry container hermetically sealed. One glass case showed in bloody effigy certain *Skoptsi* fanatics, who had cut off a breast, or some more precious organ, for religion's sake. Proud statistics marked the triumphant advance of the *Byezbozhniki*, and (for this is everywhere) the progress of the Five Year Plan. It was an impressive exhibition, well arranged; lacking in any comprehension of the functions of religion, but forgivably resentful of ancient ecclesiastical corruption and ignorance.

One Sunday morning I traveled out some forty miles from Moscow to Zagorsk, to see what the Soviet had done with the famous *Troitzko-Sergievskaya Lavra*, or Trinity Monastery of St. Sergius. In the third-class car the seats were of unadorned

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wood, comfortable enough if the traveler knew the art of muscular alternation. At the stations on the way the people crowded in, carrying baskets and bags; they too were going to Zagorsk—not to church but to the market or bazaar at which, by a recent decree, they were permitted the ancient and exhilarating pastime of buying cheap and selling dear. It was pleasant to see these gruff peasants, in their simple black blouses and spacious skirts, trudging down the road from the station to the market-place, unloading their wares, squatting by them, and waiting patiently for some exchange or sale. Here life was primitive again, became as it had been in these lands for thousands of years—a life of toilsome tillage, domestic industry, and periodic barter at the village fair. One man unraveled a greasy cloth, and displayed a medley of tools; another showed a crib which he had made of branches and reeds; beside him a woman offered apples and milk. For one ruble, nominally fifty-three cents, I bought two little green apples, found that I had been anticipated by an early worm, and threw them away.

For an hour I wandered in the maze of that crowded bazaar. The people looked at me curiously, wondered what land had produced so strange a product, and then turned to a likelier customer. I passed on, walked a mile further, and came to the famous monastery. Here were five churches gathered to-

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gether, filling the sky with their bulbous domes. The paint was peeling from them, the cement was falling away. Only twenty years before, these churches had been the goal of a hundred thousand pilgrims every year; now not a soul disturbed their death. Below, ten thousand people bargained in the market-place, but none of them came here to pray. In the Hermitage, over the hill, monks, only yesterday, had lived in underground cells, never leaving them, and receiving food through an opening in the door. Now one of the monastery churches was a dusty depot for flour; another was the meeting-room of the Zagorsk Soviet; another was an anti-religious museum.

I asked for a retiring-room, and an old attendant led me to one; I could not use it, for my predecessors had been blind. I sought a guide, and found at last a timid woman who spoke excellent German. She showed me the exhibits by which the new religion exposed the old, and reluctantly translated the insolent placards that explained to the visitor the bogus miracles, the sensual luxury, and the theological absurdity of the dying faith. I remarked that the Russian Church had deserved to die. She said nothing, but I saw that she was hurt; these relics were still holy to her.

"The people do not seem to care," I said. "Do you think that in their hearts they are still religious?"

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She hesitated, trembled as if with terror of some eavesdropping spy, and answered me passionately:

"Let them open the churches, and you will see."

Then, regretting her candor, she resumed mechanically her interpretation of the inscriptions. But I had had enough of these everlasting quotations from Marx, Engels and Lenin. I thanked her, and offered her an American half-dollar. She refused it, though she appeared to be suffering from undernourishment. I ventured one more question.

"Do the people here like the Soviet? Are they better off than before?"

She looked at me in fright, perhaps suspecting that I was a spy, some *agent provocateur*. She shut her lips tightly, turned quickly, and disappeared. It seemed to me that in her soul, at least, the old religion was not dead.

V. THE NEW RELIGION

In the Red Square three thousand people stand in line before the tomb of Lenin. They have gathered from a hundred villages and five continents to see in the flesh the man, long dead, who made the Revolution. Behind them rise the benches where the bureaucracy sits at great festivals, as once the high-

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priests sat in the Theatre of Dionysus. Behind those tiers is the red-brick wall of the Kremlin, protector of autocracies past, present and to come. Behind the wall are the offices of the new state and the new church. Behind the main government building is a simple two-room apartment in which the new Tsar and Patriarch, more modest and more powerful than the old, lives his guarded and mysterious life.

When an old religion begins to die, look for a new one. Once these pious visitors, mostly peasants and provincials gaping at the capital, made pilgrimages to Sergeievitch or Kiev, to see the uncorrupted bodies of the saints; now they come to witness the new miracle, of the Holy Founder who, by some strange and novel magic, has been preserved from decay. One by one they pass, awed and silent, through a guard of soldiers, into the marble mausoleum, down the stone steps into the earth, where the Great Ogre lies, safe within a spacious railing, no breath of these mortals touching him in his glass case. He is dressed in the uniform of a soldier, this man who hated war and promised peace; and he who despised all middle-class virtues is now astonishingly clean. His head, emptied of the brain that shook the world, is shrunk, and the cheeks are hollow, and the hands, lying on his breast, are almost fleshless, and as delicate as a doll's. One breath of revolt would

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break these bones, and tumble this yellow skin into dust. It is not chemistry that preserves him, it is the new faith.

Day by day the forms, the creed and the ritual of the new religion take shape, as the power of the dream presses into new moulds the ancient hopefulness of men. In place of the old ikons, or beside them, the pictures of Lenin and Stalin adorn every respectable, gun-fearing home in Russia; and where the people are really pious they hang up the pictures of all the great martyrs of the faith—those rough saints whose persecution and crucifixion are commemorated in the Museums of the Revolution. The old festivals are changed; and as once the Christian Church, newly come to power, took over pagan holidays and poured new names and meaning into them, so now the feast of St. John is called "The Festival of the War on Superstition," and the feast of St. Ilya has become "The Festival of Natural Science and Electrification." The old sacrament of baptism has been replaced with ceremonious acceptance of the babe into a long and pious novitiate of preparation for membership in the Communist Party. To that communion of the saints many are called but few are chosen. For the proletarian dictatorship does not mean, as the uninitiate suppose, government by the proletariat; it means that the new Church will rule *for* the proletariat, that even in its bitterest curses

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and *auto-da-fés* it will be actuated, like the old religions, solely by the good of the people. Nothing is changed.

The new clergy—the Party—is composed of “cells”; its schools are seminaries in which the catechism, as of yore, is half the curriculum; the creators of the new Bible—Marx and Engels—and of the new theology—Lenin and Stalin—are the Founders of the Church, whose powerful and acrid sermons, discourses, parables and denunciations are already gathered, as by evangelists and Mignes, into vast tomes of sacred narrative and patristic lore. For these fathers, holy and inviolate though they be, are not the God; the God is something holier than man, something omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, creator of heaven and earth and Eden—the Machine. There are many persons in this new God: He is worshiped as Power, as Mechanism, and as Electricity. His cathedral is a factory, a mine, a great farm or a dam; His ritual is Industrialization; His Ten Commandments are—*Produce!*

He is a jealous God, Who will not have other gods before Him; to deny or question Him is a mortal sin, a capital crime for which the sinner will be formally excommunicated, and sentenced to Hell—Siberia—or death. For the holiest of religious virtues is obedience; the good Communist, like some monk of the strictest observance, must efface himself, starve and destroy his personal will. Freedom of individual

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judgment, for which the Reformation fought, is a disruptive delusion; freedom in general is a petty middle-class prejudice, a sham democratic myth; and toleration, now that the Truth is definitely known, is an error and a crime. ("I became a Marxist," says Stalin of his youth, "because of Jesuitic repression, and the martinet intolerance of the Orthodox Church.") One by one the great heretics are cut off and cast into the outer darkness: Plekhanov, Trotsky, Rykov, Tomskey, Rakovsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev; not a half-century of devotion can win mercy from the high-priests, or dull the edge of this impatient guillotine. And as they disappear into the secret courts of the Inquisition, or depart—without warrant and without trial—for the dungeons to which they have been condemned, no pity rising up from the people follows them; the gentle Slav has become hard under the bludgeoning of circumstance; and even the Slav never pitied men who questioned God.

The new religion has many elements of nobility in it, and fulfils many functions of the ancient faiths. It has dignified the dreary existence of the serf or slave with the heroic drama of the Five Year Plan, and has lifted him up to majestic hopes. It has given life a purpose vast enough to enlist every individual, and to endow his brief interlude with a worth and meaning not ended by his death. It has conceived a heaven in which the insulted and injured of yester-

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day will enjoy all the luxuries of power, and has sought by this picture to enable the peasant once more to bear his toil with resignation. It has created, within tribal and doctrinal limitations, a new morality, of devotion to the Party and the State, and has given to a heterogeneous and polyglot empire the unity of one encompassing creed. Its devotees have accepted pain and suffering, menial and dangerous tasks, exhausting labor and long exiles from home, in selfless loyalty to their organization and their ideal. There are aspects of grandeur here, as well as of terror and debasement; these men have done gigantic things, even while destroying for a generation the health of the Russian body and—perhaps—the vitality of the Russian mind.

Which will win—the new religion, or the old?—or are the gods of tomorrow still unborn? *Que sais-je?* What can we tell of the real sentiments of these silent, sullen, hounded, fearful millions? What will happen if the mirage of Utopia comes to bitter disillusionment, and the dreamer of the steppes awakes to find that poverty is always with us, that men are created unfree and unequal, and that the strong and clever, under whatever form of industry or government, will forever rule and use the dull and weak? What will happen when revolutionary ardor subsides, and Russia finds that it has reached not Paradise, but only industrialization?

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Villages once converted to atheism have later been swept back into Christianity by a few preachers whose eloquence worked faster than the police. New heresies rise, flourish, are forbidden, persecuted and destroyed, and reappear. "Our country," says *Izvestia*, "is still full of a great number of various sects of believers."¹ These little groups that I have seen listening in dull astonishment and timid joy of scandal to official lectures on the non-existence of God—will they slip back and be swallowed up again in the vast ocean of emotional need and faith?

Probably the old belief will revive more strongly in Russia than elsewhere in Europe or the world; only those things survive which have a natural growth, and only those things die which have a natural death. And while the new religion of communism loses followers and devotion in the land of its birth, where the soil, as Marx believed, was not ready for it, and where men have now learned what it means and brings, it will at the same time go forth into all nations, and root itself ineradicably in the poverty of men. A world that has tired of ancient faiths, which have lost the power to convince the mind and fill the soul, longs audibly for a new myth to give life zest and purpose and an ennobling hope; and here, visibly, the creative myth is born. Only a new re-

¹ Eddy, pp. 175, 180.

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ligion can build a new civilization. The elemental thing about Russia is that it has a new religion. This is what keeps it going, and makes it, despite all failure, great.

One day, in Moscow, a young man ran up excitedly to our table, seated himself without invitation, and told us, with passion and fever, that he had spent all his savings to come from far-off America to lay himself down at Stalin's feet and beg for permission to give his life to the Soviet. In this way, surely, men once went up to Thebes and Babylon, Delphi and Ephesus, Benares and Mecca, Jerusalem and Rome. We sceptics, who love freedom more than security, and still think tenderly of the ancient shrines, are defeated Julians in an uprooted world. We shall be known only as apostates, cursed for a while, and then forgotten; our vain writings will be denounced, forbidden, expurgated and destroyed. Once again, as in our youth, faith is taken from us, and again our speech must offend those who have meant most to us. But the power of the dream will be too strong for doubt or fact; it will catch and conquer the imagination of poets, teachers, scientists and saints; hope and fantasy will win against empires, armies, fleets, and bombs raining down from the sky.

A century hence everything will be as before; the wave of revolutions will be over, a new order will

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have been established, and under new forms and myths the weak will again be used and abused by the strong. But every phrase will have been changed; and on holy days men will repair earnestly to sacred edifices, and worship piously the communistic gods.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE DICTATORSHIP OVER THE PROLETARIAT

I. THE COMMUNIST PARTY

THE catchwords of one generation are the jests of the next. When Lenin and Trotsky were exiles in Switzerland and the Bronx they took out of Marx, another intellectual, the dream of a state in which the manual workers would be supreme. They themselves earned their bread by the sweat of their pens, but with characteristic modesty they proposed that brawn should rule brains in the Utopia which they offered to the world. Though they were middle-class theoreticians, they denounced as bourgeois ideology the suspicion that there was something inherently incredible in a proletarian dictatorship; it does not seem to have occurred to them that if the proletariat could rule it would not be, or long remain, the proletariat—men who can govern states do not cobble shoes. The issue of the matter is that today it becomes possible to deal with the political life of Soviet Russia under the rubrics of a dictatorship, supposedly of the proletariat, first over the nation as a whole, then openly over the middle class or bourgeoisie, then covertly over the peasantry, finally over the proletariat itself. Nature will out.

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The dictatorship operates through a political party, a propaganda machine, a system of class law, a secret police, and an army.

There is only one political party in Russia; no other may legally exist. The Communist Party belongs to the phenomena of religious history; it is a monastic order, an ecclesiastical hierarchy of three million men and women carefully selected, rigorously trained, loyally orthodox, silently obedient, and ruthlessly devoted to the salvation of mankind. Candidates for it are prepared by a long novitiate in "Pioneer Youth" and the "Young Communist" organization, during which the memory is permeated with Marx, and the will is formed to unquestioning fidelity. From their number new members are chosen to the Party and its offices by pyramidal election from "cell" to Central Committee. And just as in the aristocratic hierarchy of the medieval Church the lowliest peasant might rise democratically to the papal chair, so in this closed circle of revolutionary power it is possible for even a Caucasian bandit to climb to the Communist throne.

Once admitted to the Party the member surrenders all individual freedom of movement and will; he (or she) must go wherever his superiors direct him, and do whatever they may command. Ways and means may be privately discussed; but once a decision has been handed down, discussion must end;

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this is a rough cloture on the Russian passion for discourse. Until recently no Communist was permitted to receive, for even the most important work, more than three hundred rubles per month; in all the Party only Stalin and a few others enjoyed this extravagant monthly wage of from six to fifteen dollars. The maximum was raised in 1932, but it remains stoically low. Some high members of the Party show a fondness for sparkling uniforms and expensive cars, for country houses, travel privileges, and vacation luxuries; but they are a minority; the rank and file still honor the Spartan code.

The morals of the Communist must be above criticism; it is expected of him that after a modest indulgence in promiscuity he will settle down, keep sober, marry, and not pay too much attention to his wife; she may be dear to him, truth may be dearer to him, but dearer still must be the Party. The woman member on her part must care more for duty than for beauty; she must not dance or drink in public, and she must get her man without lipstick, rouge, or silk-stockinged legs. Periodically the Party is "purged" of members who love too much, smoke too much, drink too much, or think too much; the "ideologically alien," the "uncommunistic," and the "disintegrative" are eliminated, and the orderly communion of saints is restored. The Party offers to Russia not only a new religion but a new morality; the

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ideals, conduct and devotion of its members supply a new source and norm of behavior, a new moral code to guide the life of a people shorn of all the old ethical institutions, sanctions and beliefs; this is an unrecognized revolution in the midst of the Revolution.

The Communists carry out nobly, fanatically, what is after all the essence of morality—the cooperation of the part with the whole. But they define the whole a little more narrowly than other saints; and their morality is as tribal as that of a barbarian horde. Anything is permissible in dealing with a non-Communist; just as one must love the Soviet and its loyal supporters, so one must hate with a withering hatred all other men; indeed, hatred tends to appear rather more frequently in the new religion than love. The class basis of morals is asserted candidly, as, for example, by Lenin: “We repudiate all morality which takes its stand above all humanity and above the classes. . . . We proclaim that our morality is entirely subordinated to the interests of the proletarian class-war. . . . Communist morality is what serves this struggle. We do not believe in any eternal morality, and we are exposing the fraud of that old fable.”¹ Some echo of the old morality spoke in Lenin when he reprimanded Stalin for robbing and

¹ Eckardt, p. 522.

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killing too exuberantly in securing funds for the Party before the Revolution.

The building of the Communist Party is one of the profoundest achievements of the Soviet. Any armed mob can make a revolution; but only a religious minority can maintain the enthusiasm and devotion needed to continue a communist régime. Such a system could not long survive democracy in a society with feudal or individualistic traditions; it depends upon the training of strong and competent men in a closed and disciplined order; the corrupt inheritors of the past must be fettered by these hard creators of the future.

Dictatorship, said Lenin, was necessary to overcome the force of bourgeois habits and customs.¹ As in the school of Pythagoras, the learner must for some time be compelled to do right, so that at last it may become habitual with him, and may create through repetition a conscience that will be ill at ease if it deviates from the inculcated norm; conscience follows the policeman. Only when the will is so formed can democracy be safe for the new order. Meanwhile one breath of popular will would upset the whole structure; for there is no doubt that the present Government is unpopular, and would be over-

¹ Lenin, N., *The State and Communism*, Detroit, no date, p. 94; *Id.*, *Left-Wing Communism*, p. 39.

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whelmingly condemned in a free and secret plebiscite.¹ "Every conscious proletarian in Russia," said Zinoviev, "knows that without the iron dictatorship of the Communist Party the Soviet Government would not have retained power for three weeks, let alone three years."²

Therefore the Party captures and holds the government by main force; and if it allows a measure of political expression to the people it is only to create the illusion of proletarian sovereignty. This frank abandonment of democracy is again a revolution within the Revolution, and is part of a growing world-wide distrust of uninformed or rebellious electorates. No fair critic can complain that the illiterate Russian peasant was not at once empowered, by the enthronement of number, to decide all the issues of the Revolution. But the gulf between the Government and the people has been so widened by the practical disfranchisement of the peasantry that there is now less opportunity for the expression of the public will than there was under the Tsars. No political mechanism is provided by which the people may check or replace an unpopular administration. The peasants are free to vote for the members of the village Soviet; but the vote is by an open raising

¹ Friedman, Elisha, *Russia in Transition*, New York, 1932, p. 468.

² *New Republic*, Dec. 22, 1920.

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of hands, and "it is unlucky," says Calvin Hoover, "not to vote for the Communist slate." Seibert describes a typical election:

After a number of speeches have been made, the chairman reads out loud the list of candidates submitted by an electoral committee, and then says, "Let those who are in favor of the list raise their hands."—"Contrary?"—"Abstentions?"—"Thank you, the list has been accepted." . . . Very rarely indeed does any one venture to put forward a name which is not agreeable to the ruling Party. Should this happen, however, and should such a candidate be elected, the Party will find ways and means of declaring the election invalid.¹

The local soviet so elected in the village or the town chooses representatives for the regional soviets; the latter choose the district soviets, these choose the provincial soviets, and these choose the All-Russian Congress of Soviets by selecting one delegate per 125,000 *population* in the villages, and one delegate per 25,000 *voters* in the towns. The members of the Congress are, by these intermediary elections, so far removed from the people that they must strain their imaginations and memories in order to think of their constituents.

But even this Congress meets only once in two years, and then for but two or three weeks. During

¹ Seibert, p. 81.

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the intervals the supreme authority is the Central Executive Committee, which meets briefly twice or thrice in the year. This again chooses a "Presidium" of twenty-seven members to rule Russia; the Party management—or, as we should say, the "machine"—presents a slate of nominations, and usually elects every nominee without trouble. The Central Executive Committee also elects, by similar lubrication, the Council of People's Commissars, to head the administrative departments of the Government. This Council, and the Presidium, are technically supreme in Russia. In reality, however, their power is derived not from the people who had so little to do with choosing them, but from the Party whose leaders nominated them; therefore it is to these leaders that they direct their responsibility and their loyalty. The Party is not mentioned in the Constitution of the Soviets; but it is in effect the government. And since in every organization those who give some of their time to its affairs are ruled by those who give all their time, the Communist Party is ruled by its Central Committee, and this is ruled by the General Secretary of the Party, Joseph Vissarionovitch Djughashvili, whom his friends and enemies call Stalin, the man of steel.

Trotsky described him as "the most prominent average man in the Party"; but it was an estimate dictated by partisan passion and a just resentment. Obviously Stalin is the analogue of Napoleon, the

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strong man whose historic function it is to consolidate and preserve, so far as he can, the fruits of the Revolution. He lives simply, showing no taste for the luxuries which tempt some of the commissars. He affects a "low-brow" pose, which is as compulsory on the elected of Russia as a top hat is to the taxers of America; but he is a man of wide reading, and of apparent taste in literature and music. He is all character and no intellect; incapable, apparently, of generating new policies of his own, but capable of carrying forward other men's proposals with a vigor and courage which they themselves might never have shown. He loves power, but no more than the rest of us. It will not serve to underrate him; he is without doubt one of the ablest men now holding office in the world. He believes that he is making a communist Utopia; probably he is only industrializing Russia; in either case he is a first-rate instrument of historic destiny.

Like many another troublesome person he was educated in a seminary and prepared for the priesthood. He did not like the tyranny of the Greek Church, and left it to make one of his own. He passed violently from piety to revolution, and became the secret agent of Lenin in the Caucasus before the War. He allowed himself no scruples in pursuing his purposes; the end seemed always to justify the means; and in pursuing these ends he stole and killed with a strong

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conscience. Time and again he was arrested, and sent to Siberia; time and again he escaped. Through the exciting days of the Revolution he remained in the background, serving Lenin, managing forces and movements, but never seeking the front of the stage. When his master rose to power Stalin rose with him; and gradually the taste for power became a fever in his blood. Those same unmoral methods which he had used against the officials of the Tsar he turned without hesitation against his own oldest comrades, rivals with him now for the supreme authority. For though these men were forbidden by their vows to seek wealth, they had not been forbidden to seek power; the struggle for it took the place, in their energetic lives, of the fight for riches in nineteenth century America. All the egotism and selfishness that well up so naturally in the human breast seemed to rise the more readily and abundantly in this competition, because suppressed or concealed before; under the temptation of opportunity all the old ruthlessness of the Tatar came to the surface in the Russian blood.

During the first decade of the Revolution the men in power were heroes formed in the turbulence of revolt and war, and tried by a generation of suffering. But as time passed indifferently over them these men grew ill like Trotzky, were exhausted like Chicherin, died like Lenin and Krassin, shot themselves

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like Joffe; the field was left open to a new type of leader, men skilled in the machinery of politics, pliable to all Party orders in climbing the ladder of power. The Revolution was made by dreamers, and inherited by politicians. No one knew so well how to manipulate these office-seekers as Stalin; no one was so well placed as he to watch their movements, track their thoughts, rule them with patronage, and guide their steps to his ends. All the subtlety and trickery, all the knavery and chicanery of the worst American political machines was brought to bear in the struggle against Trotsky, then in the struggle against Zinoviev and Kamenev, then in the struggle against Bukharin and Rykov; one group after another was outplayed, disgraced, dismissed from office, and exiled; until at last no one remained except Stalin and his loyal appointees, bent first upon holding power, then upon industrializing Russia, and then, perhaps, upon realizing communism. For these ends they would use every means that came to their hands, with or without the consent of the people.

II. THE TECHNIQUE OF DICTATORSHIP

Since the consent of the people was slow in coming, or, rather, quick in going, the Party found itself forced (for self-preservation is the first law of

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politicians) to decrease year by year the opportunities given to the nation to express its preferences and its will, and to increase year by year the mechanisms of compulsion and indoctrination. Propaganda was developed according to the latest multiform technique, and applied in quantities designed to overcome the dullness of a people stupefied by centuries of oppression and poverty. All the funds saved by the absence of competitive advertising were consumed in this monopolistic advertising of the one and only corporation, the Soviet. Facts favorable to foreign nations, or unfavorable to Russia, were concealed like obscene things. In the Anti-Religious Museum at Moscow, for example, the rising figures for military equipment in Europe were flaunted in large graphs before the visitor; but when one visitor asked where were the figures for Russian military expenditure the guide replied that these were omitted, since the Russian outlay was "only for defense."

But these masters of propaganda found themselves baffled at last by the law of diminishing returns. The nerves of the populace were worn out by being flayed from dawn to midnight with the whips of indoctrination; every month a greater quantity of stimulation was required to secure the old degree of interest, conviction and consent. At last interest yielded to exhaustion, conviction gave way to apathy, consent was replaced by doubt and unbelief. The people

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refused, with sullen unanimity, to attend propaganda films, and these had to be exported to more credulous nations. A small proportion of the people remained faithful—chiefly those who held good places under the State; a large minority became actively hostile, sabotaging the collectives, robbing the freight-trains, and murdering hundreds of officials and spies.

To propaganda, therefore, was added a system of law originally enlightened in theory, but becoming in practice more barbarous every year. The G.P.U. was empowered to arrest secretly—if it wished, to kill secretly—any person suspected of hostility to the State. The courts, which were operating with simple and expeditious justice in cases not involving any question of loyalty to the existing régime, were instructed to condemn on the slightest evidence any one whose complete fidelity was in doubt. Soviet laws, said the Public Prosecutor, the relentless Krylenko, “are nothing but the injunctions of the Party”;¹ as with the Committee of Public Safety in the French Revolution, the question was to be, not whether a man was guilty, but whether he was a Communist. Latzis, a noted leader of the *Tcheka*, said openly: “Do not ask the defendant what he did—ask him what class he belongs to; and this shall decide his fate.”²

¹ Friedman, p. 422.

² New York Times, April 23, 1930.

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The law called for humane imprisonment under conditions aiming to re-educate the condemned man rather than to confirm him in resentment and crime, and this humane code was often carried out in the case of ordinary offenders; but the practice with regard to the hundreds of thousands arrested for political heresy and obstruction was to send them to Siberia into camps more miserable than those settlements which had so loosely confined the revolutionaries under the Tsars. The penalties—which were at first moderate, rejected capital punishment, and decreed only ten years of imprisonment for murder—became more and more severe, until capital punishment was decreed for clipping silver coins, hoarding silver, smuggling currency, offering rubles at more than the legal rate, theft from a collective farm, repeated negligence resulting in injury to costly machinery, embezzlement of public money, and any offense which in the judgment of the secret police made the offender more valuable dead than alive.¹

Finally the army was increased, and was made the agency of grain collections and public terrorization. When it hesitated or refused to shoot down peasants or *kulaks* who were in some cases the parents or relatives of the soldiers,² it was injected with more propa-

¹ Friedman, pp. 338, 20, 162, 406; Seibert, p. 368.

² Friedman, p. 429.

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ganda, pampered with better food and clothing, and disciplined with death. The soldiers' councils which had controlled the army in the heyday of the Revolution were disbanded, and discipline became as strict and centralized as in Hohenzollern Germany. The entire male population from twenty to forty years of age was made liable to military service, and conscription, against which every radical in the world had complained, was made stricter than before the War. Militarism flourished—and flourishes today—in all its forms; in popular pride in the army, in the frequency with which the army appears in public life, in public drives to raise funds for planes and tanks, in the production of poisonous gases, in the repeated war-scares trumped up at the slightest opportunity to maintain military fervor and national hatreds, in the location of industries for military purposes often contrary to economic convenience, in the chauvinistic education given to the children, and in compulsory military training in the universities and the schools. The pay of the soldiers was increased to six rubles per month. Every hour or so they were sent marching or riding through the town, as vivid reminders to the public that the time was not ripe for revolt. (The weird dull tramp of their boots still sounds in the ears of a visitor accustomed to live in a country where civilians rule.) The army was used

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to gather taxes, to levy requisitions, to force peasant subscriptions to a hundred million ruble loan.¹ The dictatorship of the proletariat became a military despotism precisely like Prussia under the Kaisers, or Russia under the Tsars.

III. THE CLASS WAR GOES ON

In this "Workers' and Peasants' State" it was soon discovered that the peasants were individualists, and that they would have to be turned into socialists by force. The ancient war between the growers of food and the consumers thereof went on in Utopia as elsewhere, with the usual result that the producers of necessities became the slaves of the makers of luxuries, and the country became the butt and tool of the town. "Up to the present time," says Calvin Hoover, "the city has constantly been favored at the expense of the peasantry."² The *muzhik*, who had prospered under the Revolution and again under the N.E.P., and for a time had realized his ancient dream of individual ownership, found himself suddenly flung back into serfdom, employed and regimented by a ruthless State which always began with phrases and always ended with guns.

¹ Seibert, pp. 345, 363.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 118.

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The tyranny was applied most of all, of course, to the remnants of the old middle class. The leaders of the Soviet recognized that equality is unnatural, that it is a condition of unstable equilibrium which every new birth, every new opportunity, every new tool, disturbs; that to maintain equality you must severely limit liberty. So the middle class was chained down by a thousand laws: it was excluded from the schools, from use of the press, from the coöperative stores, from office, and from any employment which proletaires were willing to accept.¹ The children of the once well-to-do were compelled to renounce their parents publicly in order to have access to employment,² education, or food; sometimes their starving parents asked to be so renounced, in order that their families might get something to eat.³ Death by starvation or suicide was an everyday matter in the ranks of these "depressed classes," who numbered in Moscow ten per cent of the population.

The Jews suffered more than any other racial group from this casting out of the middle class. For many of them had been traders before the Revolution, and now, in their old age, they found themselves with an occupation made illegal. Hundreds and thousands of them, in the Ukraine and elsewhere, are now un-

¹ Chamberlain, p. 47.

² Friedman, p. 401.

³ Seibert, p. 319.

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dergoing slow starvation; thousands more are being supported by gifts from relatives abroad. Thousands of them beg for permission to leave Russia; thousands have friends in Europe or America who have offered to receive and support them; but the Soviet will not let them go.¹

The proletariat has been flattered by the elaborate discriminations worked out in every department of life against its rival and former exploiter, the middle class. The class war has not been ended by the Revolution, it has merely stood on its head and marched on. "Class lines," says Chamberlain, "are nowhere drawn with greater rigor than in the Soviet Union. Every student, every applicant for office, must fill out a questionnaire stating his social origin, and any suggestion of 'bourgeois' birth is as fatal a disqualification as 'Jew' in the old régime."²

Nevertheless, in the midst of this suppression of the old middle class a new middle class is born, and grows stronger and more numerous every day. Its leaders are the officials, who form everywhere a stifling and proud bureaucracy which controls the government, the market, labor, capital, wages, prices, press, the radio, the schools, the church, and every aspect of the people's life. Already in 1927 they outnumbered

¹ Robinson, Dr. Wm. J., *Soviet Russia as I Saw It*, New York, 1932, p. 91.

² Chamberlain, p. 110.

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the proletaires in the Communist Party.¹ "Nearly two-fifths of the Party members," says Seibert, "make their living directly out of the Bolshevik régime."² These officials eat well, occupy the finer apartments, have homes in the suburbs, and ride in the only passenger automobiles in Moscow. "I met Russia's leaders," says Ellery Walter, who went to Russia as an enthusiastic Communist, "and learned that they were not altruists, but individuals interested in their own comforts, and in a class snobbery equal to that of Romanoff Russia. Professing an indifference to wealth, they strive ruthlessly for power."³ Class consciousness is strong among these officials; they visibly dislike to mingle with the proletariat, and the word *Tovarishch*, or Comrade, which was applied to everyone but the disfranchised classes, is increasingly reserved for members of the Communist Party.

The technicians form another element in this new aristocracy. "Again and again," says Chamberlain, "one may read, or notice in life, that the young worker who acquires a skilled trade, enabling him to earn high wages, visibly loses interest in world revolution and the triumph of communism, simultaneously adopting a rather contemptuous attitude

¹ Eckardt, p. 502.

² P. 99.

³ Walter, Ellery, *Russia's Decisive Year*, New York, 1932, p. 266.

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towards his less skilled fellows.”¹ “Foreign engineers testify,” says Elisha Friedman, “that the present Russian engineering-school graduate has a superiority complex, and will not mingle with the working staff. . . . American engineers stay on the job. Russian engineers sit in their offices. . . . The American engineer is more democratic in his relations with the manual laborer.”² Everywhere one sees signs of the natural stratification of men: in the first, second and third classes on the trains; in the various “categories” into which Intourist divides its victims; in the truculence with which the few automobile drivers scatter aside the lowly pedestrians, in the better feeding of Moscow than of other cities, in the better feeding of the cities than of the country. “Now as before,” says Eckhardt, “there are rich and poor.”³ How true, against this background, appear the words of that almost infallible psychologist, Napoleon: “Among nations and in revolutions, aristocracy always exists. If you attempt to get rid of it by destroying the nobility, it immediately re-establishes itself among the rich and powerful families of the third estate”—i. e., the middle class. “Destroy it there, and it survives and takes refuge among the leaders of the workers and the people.”⁴ Inequality arises

¹ P. 33.

² P. 244.

³ P. 614.

⁴ Bertaut, J., *Napoleon in His Own Words*, Chicago, 1916, p. 46.

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inevitably out of human differences, and those differences are indispensable to the very process of development; they are the goals of human emulation, and the material which nature selects in elevating the type. "Masses of men who are approximately equal," said Sumner, "are in time exterminated or enslaved."¹ Russia had to choose between inequality and death.

IV. THE PROLETARIAT UNDER THE DICTATORSHIP

How does the proletaire himself fare in this proletarian dictatorship?

Here is a sample factory; fairly well built, well lighted, and as clean as can be asked of a plant for making Diesel engines. One suspects that the man in charge must be a foreigner. No, he is a Russian, with five years of training in America; a quiet and able fellow, much discouraged by waste, incompetence, and a heavy turn-over; but the waste is less than it was, and he believes that he could make good products if only Russia would give him good men. For the productivity of the Russian workingman is still only one-eighth of the American's.²

The workers seem sturdy but listless, good-natured

¹ Sumner, W. G., *Folkways*, Boston, 1906, p. 48.

² American-Russian Chamber of Commerce, *Economic Handbook of the Soviet Union*, New York, 1931, p. 10.

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but humorless; no smile is visible on them anywhere. They work hard, but apparently without spontaneous interest or ambition; a bitter system of compulsion has had to replace family love and personal gain as the incentive to production. The class pride which earlier observers noted is still there—they know that though they are poor and harassed, nearly everybody else in Russia is poor and harassed too. But the pride is strangely mingled with despondency; these men have already begun to doubt whether they have found the way.

The labor code drawn up for them is humane, but circumstances always seem to prevent its application.¹ The code, for example, forbade the use of women in the mines; but when the Donetz miners went on strike the Coal Trust employed women to take their place.² The working day is normally only seven hours long—but there are so many exceptions! "By law," says a Donetz miner, "we should have a six-hour working day; but in practice it sometimes turns into a ten-hour day."³ The five-day week, with different holidays for different shifts of men, has been abandoned for the six-day week, with a common holiday for each region. Minimum wages are established by law, but at so low a figure that

¹ Chamberlain, p. 173.

² Friedman, p. 227.

³ Chamberlain, p. 167.

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they mean nothing. Wages run from one to two hundred rubles per month, with double pay for over-work; they have risen repeatedly, but only nominally, since 1928, never able to balance the rise of prices and the fall of the ruble;¹ today they range from two to ten dollars per month in terms of their purchasing power in the market. The factory restaurant provides a nourishing, though ill-balanced, meal for a ruble or two every noon, and the worker's bread-card entitles him to buy at low prices a small ration of bread, sugar, butter, tea, and (as a rare luxury) eggs or meat, if he will stand in one line after another at the dingy coöperative stores—and if any of these delicacies is there to be bought. He is obviously underfed; this and the unexpectedly long road to Utopia are the sources of his listlessness; and his listlessness is a secret factor in the breakdown of the Five Year Plan.

How ideal were the conditions of labor in the early days of the Revolution! Then, when to be alive was very heaven, the simple workingman determined in his committees and his trade-union meetings the wages and hours of his work; and no one could dismiss him without the consent of his fellow-workingmen. But, alas, that dream is ended; now it is not the workers' committee that rules the factory, but the distant and unanswerable Government,

¹ Seibert, p. 374.

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through a manager endowed with power to hire and dismiss, and burdened with responsibility not to make high wages for the workers, but high profits for the State. Managers do not hesitate to cut wages in order to show profits for their factories.¹ The heads of the various Trusts into which Russian industry is divided dismiss officials who seem to them too lenient to workers guilty of a breach of factory discipline; and these breaches of discipline are innumerable.² Once the proletaire could leave his work at will, and seek better conditions elsewhere; indeed, so discontented has he been that he has held no job longer on the average than one year, and has overcrowded the railroads in his vain quest for that Nowhere of which his newspapers were always giving him such exhilarating news. But now he must not leave his work without consent of the State, or of the management which represents the State; if he does he forfeits his noon-day meal, and that ration card without which he starves.³

Once his trade union interceded and fought for him with the Government; now it intercedes and fights for the Government with him. Its function is no longer to represent the material interests of its members, but to keep them docile under any new

¹ Friedman, p. 226.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 165-7.

³ *New York Times*, Nov. 17, 1932.

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decree of the State. Its old leaders have been deposed for not understanding this sufficiently; and the greatest and most famous of them, Tomsky, now languishes in Siberia. The Russian trade union would never dare to call a strike; for though a strike is not explicitly illegal, those who should attempt to organize one would be taking their lives in their hands. "A trade union official," says the impartial Chamberlain (recently fêted by the Russian writing fraternity of Moscow as an honest correspondent), "is more certain of dismissal if he disregards the orders of the Communist Party than if he is indifferent to the needs of his trade union members."¹ No wonder that the Syndicalists of France are cold to the Soviet.

Conscription of labor has become the order of the day. In February and March, 1930, men skilled in moving timber were conscripted from other industries and compelled to migrate to the lumber regions; in January, 1931, all former transport workers were conscripted, and directed to report for assignment everywhere in Russia;² on April 26, 1931, all men, in any industry, who had served as seamen during the preceding ten years, were compelled to rejoin the sea.³ "If," says Calvin Hoover, "workers do not go where they are sent, various misfortunes are liable

¹ P. 176; Seibert, p. 379.

² Hopper, p. 201.

³ *New York Times*, May 18, 1931.

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to befall them.”¹ If they do not work with the speed expected of them, one of the 200,000 “shock-brigades” into which the younger and stronger workers are organized will come to “speed them up” and to quiet their rebellions, often enough by force. “A Soviet manager can drive Soviet workmen harder than a ‘capitalist’ engineer,” says Friedman. Mass production and the conveyor belt system, which Communists have condemned in other countries as an inhuman exploitation of labor, are adopted whenever possible in Russia.²

The very pretense to a proletarian dictatorship has enabled the Soviet to use methods of exploitation which would arouse bitter indignation among the workers of western Europe or America. When it wished to increase production, “the Soviet Government grew more severe,” says Eckhardt; “with an unconcern which a bourgeois government would have found difficult, it demanded increased severity in the conditions and control of labor, . . . reduced wages and bonuses, cut down allowances and maintenance grants, and finally succeeded in increasing output.”³ A resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, as far back as 1924, demanded the periodical lowering of piece-work rates

¹ Address at Atlanta, Ga., Feb. 11, 1932.

² Friedman, pp. 232, 226, 409.

³ P. 631.

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in proportion to improvements in the technique of organization and production; and a decree of the Supreme Economic Council of November 29, 1931, forbade the raising of wages when such an increase would lead to a rise in the cost of production; i. e., the State behaved precisely as any employer in Europe or America. "Surplus value" is still squeezed out of the worker to supply great funds of capital; the capital is managed and distributed by the State; and the State is far more ruthless and irresponsible than the great corporation in America. Against this dictatorship of doctrinaires there is no recourse. It is exploitation socialized.

Within Russia this is realized, and the phrases of the Soviet no longer deceive the people; outside of Russia, where the phrases are known much better than the reality, the deception flourishes. The vast majority of communist workers who went to Russia from other countries to devote themselves to the new cause, have returned;¹ the vast majority of visitors to Russia, mostly sympathetic at the outset, come back disillusioned but silent; they realize that no one who has not seen the reality will believe their report, and that the power of the dream will be greater than any truth.

There are mitigating conditions in this serfdom, as in every system of life. Here and there, in the

¹ Friedman, p. 241.

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cities, parks have been laid out to give the masses a breathing spell, and offer them some mild amusements under the strict supervision of the State. Public sanitation is progressing, hygiene is being taught, and medical service, so far as it can go around, is given to the worker without charge. Numerous hospitals have been established, and the death rate, as in other countries, has been substantially reduced; despite the scarcity of milk, infantile mortality is half what it used to be. Physicians have risen in number and fallen in quality. The new prestige of the manual worker and the engineer has reduced the eagerness of young men to study medicine; those who nevertheless apply are rushed through a three-year course, and sent out to learn the rest by experiment. The worker is entitled to a week of vacation yearly with pay; and if he has done brilliant things he may be sent to recuperate for two weeks in the palaces and the sunshine of the Crimea. If he is disabled by accident while at work, he receives his full salary for a time, then two-thirds, then one-third of it indefinitely. If he is unemployed through no fault of his own he receives unemployment insurance—but the State no longer admits that he may be unemployed through no fault of his own. In old age he may expect a modest pension—now made almost worthless by the depreciation of the currency; and if he leaves behind him a widow who cannot support

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herself, she too will be pensioned by the Government. It would be an admirable system if it were not slavery.

V. THE NEW LIBERALISM

What astonishes the historian in this connection is the completeness with which the predictions of Herbert Spencer have been fulfilled. Marx thought that socialism would come first in the most highly industrialized countries—an opinion which has disturbed the Bolsheviks, and led to much casuistry; Spencer, on the contrary, thought that socialism would appear most naturally in military and feudal societies, with traditions of regimentation and mass obedience. Marx thought that the state would die out under socialism; Spencer prophesied that it would become an omnivorous monster, fatal to every liberty. In 1896 Spencer wrote:

Under the compulsory arbitration which socialism would necessitate, . . . the regulators, pursuing their personal interests, . . . would not be met by the combined resistance of all workers; and their power, unchecked as now by refusals to work save on prescribed terms, would grow and ramify and consolidate until it became irresistible. . . . When from regulation of the workers by the bureaucracy we turn to the

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bureaucracy itself, and ask how it is to be regulated, there is no satisfactory answer. . . . Under such conditions there must arise a new aristocracy, for the support of which the masses would toil, and which, being consolidated, would wield a power far beyond that of any past aristocracy.¹

Or consider the prediction of Kropotkin:

All are agreed in repudiating the new form of the Wage-System which would be established if the State became the owner of all the land, the mines, the factories, the railways, and so on, and the great organizer and manager of agriculture and all the industries. If these powers were added to those which the state already possesses (taxes, defense of the territory, subsidized religions, etc.), we should create a new tyranny, even more terrible than the old one.²

These predictions have been literally fulfilled. Surely the time has come for the intellectuals, the liberals and the radicals of the world to speak out about this new slavery, to call it clearly and bluntly what it is. For it can no longer be doubted that in this dictatorship of politicians is to be found every abuse which liberals and radicals have denounced in their own societies for generations. Through its doctrinaire persistence in an unworkable theory, the Soviet has allowed its people to starve by the thousands, and everything in Russia to deteriorate except some heavy

¹ *Principles of Sociology*, New York, 1910, vol. iii, p. 588.

² Quoted in *The Clarion*, New York, December, 1932.

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industries designed chiefly for the purposes of war. It has choked all competition, and made itself a monopoly of monopolies; it has restored serfdom, conscription of labor, and indentured servitude among a people that had recently liberated itself, by revolution and civil war, from these feudal chains; it has destroyed the coöperatives which were the pride of Russia, and might have formed the basis of a liberal and self-governing society; it has taken all power from the trade-unions, and made them subservient to the interests of the employing class; it has speeded up labor with conveyor belts, mass production, and scientific management; it has kept wages low and labor intense, and has made democracy in the factory only a sham; it has herded and regimented its people like cattle. It has pitilessly industrialized its women under the pretense of emancipating them; it has crowded the population into dingy quarters, and offered every discouragement to the creation of homes. It has inflated its currency, cheated its visitors by selling them rubles at twelve times their value, and confiscated, by compulsory lotteries and loans, the savings of its people. It has raised year by year its expenditure for army and navy, gases and planes and the other instruments of war, while denouncing other nations for doing the same; it has subjected its population to conscription, while condemning as militaristic such nations as Great Britain and America, in which conscription

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exists only in time of war; it has militarized its schools, and the mind of its people; it has indulged in a chauvinistic exaggeration of the virtues of its own system and government, and in a jingoistic vilification of every other system and every rival land. It has stifled the growth of democracy, and has centralized power into a dictatorship of fanatics and machines; it has waged a class war against peasants, tradesmen, and mental workers, far bitterer and harsher than anything in the states which it pretends to scorn; it has maintained a sham electoral system in which there is no opportunity for the expression of the public will; it has in effect given to one party a monopoly of all important offices, and of the right to nominate for any office; it has allowed one political machine to dominate not merely the life of the cities, but of the entire country; it has deceived its people with specious phraseology and false issues in the manner of the worst political parties anywhere. It has corrupted the law and its administration to narrow class ends; it has punished with death crimes which in other states are rated as minor offenses; it has oppressed with unsurpassed barbarity men and women guilty of no other crime than the prosperity attendant upon enterprise, industry, intelligence and thrift; it has refused the rights of *habeas corpus*, of trial by jury, of equality before the law; it has sent its secret police into a

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million homes with power to investigate opinions, to confiscate foreign moneys, to inquire into the causes of a family's prosperity, to arrest, to imprison and to kill, without a word of explanation to anybody; it has terrorized the public with marching armies, secret police, merciless penalties, and a million spies. It has deported or shot hundreds of thousands of men and women solely for political heresy and non-conformance, and has released real criminals to make room for more political offenders in its jails. It has subjected to censorship every drama and every book, even every opera; it has prostituted the press, the radio and the stage to class propaganda, and closed them to every rival view; it has suppressed all freedom of speech or assembly, and in effect has raised a thousand obstacles against the freedom of worship and belief; it has taught its people to read, but chiefly to stupefy them with one-sided indoctrination; it has subordinated all education to material ends, and set up for popular worship the ideal of multiplying physical luxuries and goods; it has stifled academic liberty, and restricted science to the passing purposes of the state. It has destroyed with barbarous misunderstanding all those values of manners, morals, letters and arts, which found some place amid the despotism and exploitation of the old régime.

Spinoza described all this in two sentences two hundred and fifty years ago: "Experience," he said,

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"is thought to teach that it makes for peace and concord to confer the whole authority upon one man. Yet if slavery, barbarism and desolation are to be called peace, men can have no worse misfortune."¹ Slavery, barbarism and desolation; this, fundamentally, despite a thousand minor virtues, is what Russia is today.

Let the liberals of Europe and America be warned: if by their support and connivance a despotism of this kind is established in western Europe or America, they will be the first victims of its savage power; they will follow the Russian intellectuals, the Social Revolutionaries, the Mensheviks, the libertarians, to exile or to jail. Let them support the Soviet only if they have known it at first hand; let them find out for themselves before they hitch their wagon to this falling star. And if some philanthropist would help this generation, let him send the Communist leaders of America, at his expense, to live for a month or two in Russia, in order that they may know, and tell, what paradise it is to which they have offered their martyrdom. I do not pity the liberals, who are not driven by poverty to their strange idolatry of an illiberal and reactionary régime; my sympathy goes out most strongly to those young Communists who out of suffering and destitution have stretched their hands up towards Russia as the land of their faith

¹ *Tractatus Politicus*, ch. vi.

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and their hope. I know from experience what it will cost them to awaken from their dream.

VI. ESCAPE

The last and bitterest item is the refusal of the right to leave. Thousands and hundreds of thousands beg to be allowed to depart, but the Soviet will not hear of their going. Their departure would not merely increase the shortage of labor in Russia, it would subject the Communist experiment to bitter and multitudinous exposure abroad. How gladly a vast number would leave may appear from the many Soviet emissaries who, when they find themselves safely across the frontier, desert the service never to return; in some cases Russian engineers sent on missions abroad have committed suicide rather than live in Russia again.¹

Exit is not specifically forbidden. With the sardonic humor which characterizes the Soviet, the law was recently amended so that those who wish to leave may secure passports by paying \$250 per person for members of a trade union, \$500 per person for others. But the money must be paid to the Government not in its own rubles, but in foreign currency, which it is illegal for the Russian people to possess. Even if

¹ Hopper, p. 202; Friedman, p. 442.

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they could amass it, \$250 would, at present actual rates of exchange, require at least 5000 rubles—i. e., the equivalent of the earnings of the average Russian for four years; earnings which, of course, are soon exhausted in the purchase, when possible, of the barest necessities of life. What irony it is that millions would leave Communist Russia and cannot, and millions would come to America despite her breakdown, and must be kept out by force. So the world mutely expresses its judgment of realities and dreams.

After a month in this gigantic prison the one thought of the traveler is to escape, to breathe again some air of liberty. For who could bear for more than a month at a time this atmosphere of misery, of spying, of secret arrests, of censored theatre and press, of decrees tyrannically issued and enforced upon unhappy slaves? Who could feel any moment of happiness in this decay of order, courtesy, artistry, cleanliness and freedom?

We had intended to stay to the last minute, to spend every day of our summer in this land of a thousand experiments. We were cowards, and fled before the time was up; we felt that if we did not get away we should become cynics forever. We went to Intourist and bought tickets for Warsaw for the next evening. When at last, after nerve-racking delays, we found ourselves at the train, the conductor

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told us that the tickets which had been sold to us were useless; that the space named in them was already sold to others; that every compartment in the train was filled, and that we should have to wait in Moscow another day. For half an hour we argued, until at last we persuaded the conductor to let us use his own little compartment. It was dingy and dirty, covered with crumbs from the damp bread which was almost his only sustenance; but when the train moved slowly out of Moscow we were as happy as Dante rescued from Hell.

The next afternoon we crossed the Russian frontier at Negoreloye. Great barbed-wire entanglements, many feet high, marked the boundaries of Utopia; soldiers stood with ready rifles at the bridges, and on the sentry towers. I could see in imagination the hundreds of Russians who had tried to pass this frontier, and had been shot, or had been stopped and sent back to their enormous jail. Our baggage was examined with speed and courtesy by the Soviet customs officials, and we changed from the unclean cars of Russia to the spotless train run by the Polish Government from Stolpce to Warsaw. We looked back with horror and pity upon the land of our dreams, and prayed that liberation might come soon to those 150,000,000 prisoners whom we had left behind.

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VII. LOOKING BACKWARD

It was strange that in Poland and Germany, though there too dictatorship existed and civil liberties had been withdrawn, food and clothing were abundant in the shops, and the people on the streets were as cheerful,¹ and almost as comfortably dressed, as in America. We visited the working-class quarters, and found many unemployed; but they were being fed by the municipality and the state, and it seemed to us that the lowliest idle in Germany were better fed than the best-paid laborers of Russia. Apparently the freedom of the normal motives to production in western Europe and America had resulted in more food and goods than could be bought by the underpaid masses; and the suppression of many normal motives to production in Russia had resulted in less food and goods than the poorly paid masses had had under the Tsars, or under the New Economic Policy of Lenin. The lowest classes in western Europe may be as badly off as the upper half in Russia; but besides the poor in Europe there are millions of people who enjoy some degree of comfort, cleanliness, civility, and the arts. Russia is what America would be if all but the poorest tenth had been exiled or killed,

¹ This was written before the recent despicable persecution of the Jews in Germany.

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or reduced to the level of the rest. As Balfour said to Chicherin, communism is an excellent plan for making rich men poor, but a very middling plan for making poor men rich.

One might say likewise of individualism that it is an excellent plan for producing goods, but a very middling plan for distributing them; it has the distinction of starving people through a surplus of food. In the main saloon of the *Europa*, as we crossed the Atlantic homeward, we found a vulgar extravagance, a spendthrift display of luxury, jewelry, and aimless expensive leisure, which almost overcame our distaste for communism, and made us judge it more leniently.

In the perspective of the interminable sea we saw how purely personal our reaction to Russia had been. We met travelers who had seen more of Russia than ourselves, and yet thought it good; and we had to confess that our experience had been fragmentary, and our stay shamefully brief. We reflected, in our new calm, that the poverty and the despotism which we had seen were not new to Russia; that they had existed under the Tsars as well as under the Soviet; that industrial serfdom had been introduced by Peter rather than by Stalin; and that one could not expect a nation to learn liberty within a generation. Freedom is a luxury of security; every government is despotic when it is threatened, or is about to fall. We recalled that Russia thought itself surrounded by

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enemies ready to attack it at any chance; and this fear of war made understandable something of the regimentation and chauvinism of the new régime. If Communists had never exalted Russia above America, but had only compared it with the Empire of the Tsars, we might have been less bitterly disillusioned by the illiberalism of the Soviet.

In this perspective the achievements of Russia since 1917 took on a certain grandeur and scope. Here was a nation which had overthrown one of the most powerful and vicious of modern despotisms, and had maintained its novel government against a hundred assaults from nearly every quarter of the globe; which had tried to realize, on a scale beyond precedent, and in the midst of a world made cynical by slaughter and treachery, the age-long aspirations of oppressed men for a humane and coöperative state; a nation which, despite the chaos and destruction of war and revolution, and without foreign credits of any kind, had dotted its land almost overnight with great factories, oil-wells and mines, and had laid the basis for its economic independence in case of attack from abroad; which had brought unity, and some measure of order and peace, to half a hundred diverse nationalities disposed to mutual hatred and strife, had respected their languages and encouraged their cultures, and had liberated their women, and its own, from an immemorial servitude; which had spread

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literacy and education among a people traditionally untutored and dull, and was moulding a generation unlike any that history had ever known. We tried to imagine the mental discomfort which a young Russian, who had never experienced anything but socialism, would feel in individualist America; and we began to see our own irritation and disgust with some illumination of humor and tolerance. Our old affection for the Russian people returned to us intensified by the tyranny and suffering which we had seen.

Therefore our conclusion, strange as it might appear, was that our country should help the people of Russia in every unpatronizing way, even by offering a conditional recognition to the government that so mercilessly exploits them. We knew the obstacles to recognition: that America had shared, to the extent of \$160,000,000, in loans to Russia—chiefly to the Kerensky Government—which the Soviet had repudiated; that the Soviet had appropriated, without payment, \$440,000,000 of American property in Russia; that the Third International, with the connivance of the Soviet, had made propaganda, and sometimes supplied funds, for the overturn of capitalist governments; and that no system of industry can reasonably be asked to aid a rival system that is trying to destroy it. But the Soviet has time and again offered compromises on the Russian debt, which our

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past and prospective concessions to other debtors may now make more acceptable than before; it has shown its willingness to compensate foreign corporations for their losses by offering them additional remuneration for new shipments and services to Russia; it has withdrawn all effective support from the Third International, and has practically abandoned efforts to foment revolutions in other states—fearing the world war, and the interruption of supplies for the new factories, which would follow such chaotic overturns. Recognition would open up, through easier credits to Russia, a vast market for our manufactured goods; it would strengthen the United States in the Far East; it would bring Russia within the circle of international agreements and restraints, would facilitate the reduction of armaments, and would make for both the moderation of the Soviet and the peace of the world.

As water in communicating vessels finds a common level, so two economic systems trading with each other will approximate through mutual imitation of their most successful elements. Peaceable intercourse between Russia and America will accelerate that gradual amalgamation of socialism and capitalism which is now going on in socialist and capitalist countries alike. Already the government-owned railways of Europe, the government-controlled railroads of the United States, the increasing control, by capi-

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talist governments, of credit, industry and foreign trade, the almost confiscatory taxes on high incomes and inheritances in western Europe and America, the regulation of public utilities and of fuel and mineral reserves, the spread of social insurance against unemployment and accident, the increasing role of the state in caring for children, the sick and the old—all these are signs of that Hegelian synthesis of contradictories which the future seems to hold in store for conservatives and radicals alike. Each system can learn from the other: Russia can teach us a planned economy, the use of social motives in production, the abandonment of race prejudice, the elimination of extravagance and display; and America can teach Russia the rationalization of industry, the reduction of incompetence and waste, the stimulation of production through the motives of private gain and parental love, the methods of peaceful economic and political change, and the uses and values of liberty.

As our ship glides through the Narrows we see that little channel between approximating shores as a symbol of this meeting of opposites, and of the hard choice which the world faces between a system that promises security without liberty, and one that promises liberty without security; between a socialism that will regiment our lives, and an individualism that may destroy us through accumulating in-

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equalities, faction, and strife. Security fares badly in this world, partly because there is no evolution where fools and sluggards are as secure and comfortable as the industrious and competent, and partly because those who are above the average in economic ability prefer liberty to security, and (being above the average) tend to have their way, and to determine institutions. In that suggested graph of abilities the fate of communism is sealed.

Nevertheless, the last word must be for Russia. Her plan for destroying the strong and enthroning the weak has had to fail, for there is no mechanism in nature by which the weak may control the strong; but it was an heroic undertaking, out of which many gifts will come to the human race. We too have failed; the individualism which made us rich now makes us poor, and we flounder about for some escape from suicide by revolution. Perhaps out of the trial and error of a suffering Russia and a bankrupt world we may find at last a synthesis which will provide some conscience for our ability, some unity for our powers, some distribution for our production, some education for our leadership, and some order for our freedom.