

RUSSIA UNDER THE RED FLAG

A RECORD OF SOCIALISM IN OUR TIME

BY

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TO THE RUSSIAN PEOPLE

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FOREWORD

THIS book gives a short account, taken from Russian sources, of the greatest experiment in Socialism in our time. It supplies a summary of the results of this experiment in regard to government, religion, education, personal and political liberty, industry, and the land.

And, if the geographical and cultural remoteness of the Russian peoples inclines the Englishman but slightly acquainted with international reactions to say, 'What is Russia to me?' the reply is : Russia, to-day, is the complete example of the change which the English electorate is asked to effect at every election—that of transforming the English Constitution into a Socialist State. In the 'United Soviet and Socialist Republics' of Soviet Russia, Socialism can be observed in active control of every relation of life. In Soviet Russia may be seen reflected, as in a mirror, the new England which Socialism is striving, with great energy, to create. And, moreover, the Soviet Government, to the support of which, by diplomatic recognition, the English Socialist and Labour Party is pledged, is ceaselessly

engaged in the endeavour to erect, on the ruins of existing civilizations, States similar to its own throughout the world.

Some knowledge of Russia, as she is to-day after eleven years of government under the Red Flag, is of intimate concern to all English men and women who value religious, political, and industrial freedom.

G. M. GODDEN.

March 1929.

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RUSSIA UNDER THE RED FLAG

CHAPTER I

' ALL POWER TO THE SOVIETS '

'The speech of Lenin is a hammer, which smashes relentlessly all obstacles.'—MAXIM GORKI.

THE night of April 13, 1917, saw the launching of an offensive against the present social order of Europe, and of the East. From that moment there began, in Russia, the erection of an international powerhouse whence are directed live currents of disruption against all existing States. The leader of sixty revolutionaries, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, declared that April night, as he and his colleagues stepped out from their German train, that the dawn of a world-wide Revolution was at hand. Revolutions are no new thing. The new thing that then leaped into active being was a systematic attempt to crush, either by the hammer-blows of main force, or by the penetration of subtle unceasing intrigue, the constitutional governments, the existing moral codes, and the religious faiths of the world.

Lenin showed an incredulous Europe how

"Liberty is a bourgeois superstition."

Lenin.

one man, guided by a tactical genius for revolution, and animated by a ruthless determination, can capture and break up the entire mechanism of a great State, and remould it to his own imperious will. Having destroyed the fabric of the new Russian Republic, he proceeded to attempt the undermining of all constituted authority, in two hemispheres. His emissaries were found at work in Europe, in America, throughout the East. And on his death his lieutenants have carried on his aims with the fanaticism of disciples. The attack directed by these new rulers of Russia against all other civilizations has not slackened for an instant. 'Lenin is dead, but his works live on,' declares the inscription on his tomb in the Kremlin. At the moment of his death it was recognized, even by the most bitter of his opponents, that this man had let loose new and incalculable forces that would not die with him. 'He was something that is not known even yet. He was a force that is everywhere felt.' Men said of him that analogies for his actions must be sought in remote and barbarous periods of the world's history. He pulverized his opponents by an unexampled use of terrorism. 'Where Robespierre slew by thousands, Lenin slew by tens of thousands.' He erected in Russia a centre, and a starting point, for the dissemination of new theories of human existence. And theory with Lenin was always, as he himself declaimed, 'not a dogma, but a manual of action.'

It was this manual of action which Lenin continually urged on his hearers, and which he developed, completed, and unified into a system of government, from that first speech delivered on his arrival at the Petrograd station. As he stood on the top of an armoured car, lit up by the flare of searchlights, and surrounded by the red banners of revolution, he called on the people, surging beneath him, to recast the world:—'Dear Comrades, soldiers, sailors, workers, this is the beginning of civil war throughout Europe. Long live the world-wide revolution!' It was from that night that Lenin, by his magnetic speeches, by his long-prepared and swiftly intuitive action, gained the domination of Russia, and attempted to gain the domination of Europe and the East. His speeches, like his leadership, were resonant of an iron will. 'He hammers his audience until they submit, lose their senses, and are taken prisoners,' said Sukhanov, in this same year, 1917. 'Lenin is a guillotine that thinks,' said another, feeling the merciless brain, hard and sharp as the edge of a steel blade. 'Lenin,' said Gorki, 'speaks with an iron tongue, with the logic of an axe! His speech is a hammer which smashes relentlessly all obstacles.'

The first blows of this hammer destroyed, relentlessly, the newly created Russian Republican State. 'The people,' said Lenin, 'must break up the machine of the State; this I have pointed out many times, since the fourth of August 1917.'¹

¹ N. Lenin, *Will the Bolsheviks maintain Power?*, p. 38.

This was the first act of the world drama planned by the brain of Lenin. But the brain of Lenin was always that of the internationalist. Having broken up the State machine, and replaced it by a new one, the victorious people were then to become 'the vanguard of the International Revolutionary Proletariat.'¹ They are to fulfil the task of developing, supporting, and awakening revolution in all countries. The ruthless blows of the red hammer are not only a Russian, they are an international phenomenon.

Lenin, doubtless, owed his sudden advent to power in Russia partly to that instinct to 'break out and to smash' which a competent observer declares to have been latent in the Russian masses for centuries.² The Russian word *buntar* expresses this national tendency. A *buntar* is a man who is ready to smash through any opposition, one indeed who rejoices, from exuberance of vigour, in meeting with the greatest opposition. Russian history is full of outbreaks of elemental hatred, led by *buntars*. 'Lenin,' we are told, 'is probably the last of the Russian *buntars*.' He is also the first of international *buntars*, endeavouring to force upon the world a new and violent creed of human relationships. In the course of ten years Europe has become familiar with this apostolate. To ignore an international offensive of this magnitude would be fatuous. To over-estimate it is, perhaps,

¹ N. Lenin, *What is to be done?*, 1902, and the *Proletarian Revolution*.

² Michael Farbman, *Bolshevism in Retreat*, p. 56.

easy. To understand it, it is necessary to know the results of eleven years of the 'iron grip,' to use Zinovieff's phrase, of Leninism in Russia. In other countries this new and strange social phenomenon can only be studied in fragmentary forms; in Russia, from October 1917 to the spring of 1921, it can be seen in operation unhampered by any restraining force; from 1921 onwards it can be seen restrained by force of external circumstances but untouched in essence.

The little group of Leninists, the Russian Communists or Bolsheviki, were already, while in exile, fully imbued with their leader's dogma that 'proletarian revolution is impossible without the violent destruction of the bourgeois governmental machine, and the putting of a new one in its place.'¹ It was not the historic Russian autocracy of the Tsars which fell beneath the sledge-hammer blows of Lenin in 1917. It was the new Russian Republic; a 'democratic bourgeois republic, more free considering the state of war,' as Lenin himself declared, 'than that of any other country in the world.'² It was the new Republic, with its provisional Government, under the premiership of Kerensky, the peaceful advent of which had been hailed by Maxim Gorki as the 'sunniest and greatest of all Revolutions.' The first rays of that republican sun shone out on the

¹ N. Lenin, *The Proletarian Revolution*. It is affirmed that Lenin was preparing for the Bolshevik seizure of power as early as November 1914, and that by October 1915 he had elaborated his programme of the Revolution in detail.

² N. Lenin, *Left Wing Communism*, pp. 15, 99.

day of the abdication of the Tsar, on March 15, 1917; the last rays sank in blood-red clouds, six months later, to the sound of a cry new to the ears of the world: 'All power to the Soviets.'

To the Russian of 1917 the word 'soviet' conveyed little more than strike committee; and he would perhaps have replied to questions as to the nature of this new growth with some Russian equivalent for the English phrase 'talking shops.' And for months the Soviets, which began to appear in every town, in every village, in every factory, in every regiment, and on the battleships of the fleet, were little more than centres for discussion. In June the force behind the Soviets found them sufficiently organized for delegates to be sent to a first *All Russian Congress of Soviets*, held in Petrograd. The delegates arrived from all parts of Russia, and included both soldier delegates and sailors from the five Russian fleets. In this Congress the Communist delegates, the Bolsheviks, formed a small minority group representing a party membership of 150,000. Six months later they were the rulers of Russia.

During those summer months of 1917 this small minority was busy with propaganda, pouring out, every day, 'bales and car loads of Bolshevik gospel in print.'¹ Petrograd published *Pravda* (Truth), *The Soldier*, and *The Village Poor* in

¹ A. R. Williams, *Through the Russian Revolution*, p. 23. Labour Publishing Co., 38 Great Ormond Street.

millions of copies. But propaganda is useless unless allied to a policy; and the organizers of the minority group assumed to themselves, with consummate revolutionary strategy, four battle-cries corresponding to the four needs of which the Russian people were at that moment most conscious. These four propaganda cries were the need of putting an end to the war, the need of free holding of land, the removal of the food shortage, and political liberty. Thus was utilized the mass-hunger for peace; the mass-hunger for land; the suffering from lack of food; and the deep longing for political rights. Also, the minority group, during this summer, crystallized their policy in the eyes of the people by constant processions of soldiers, sailors, and workmen through the streets. 'Who can forget Petrograd of July 1?' writes an eye-witness. 'Soldiers in drab and olive, horsemen in blue and gold, white-bloused sailors from the fleet, black-bloused workmen, on each a scarlet handkerchief or a red sash. Above all, like crimson foam, sparkled and tossed a thousand banners of red. And from the resonant voices of the soldiers, workmen, from the plaintive voices of the working women came the refrains of the revolutionary marching songs.'¹ The red banners carried the carefully chosen appeals to the masses of Russian workers,—*Factories to the Workers! Land to the peasants! Down with the War! And the Provisional Government, smitten*

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

with provisional blindness, took no heed of these things. As the Russian proverb says: 'They went to the circus, but they did not see the elephant.' And their false security gained in assurance by the rapid quelling of Lenin's attempt at armed revolt late in July, an attempt suppressed by loyal troops, brought into Petrograd. Lenin and Zinovieff went into hiding. Trotzky and Kameneff went into prison. And the Petrograd Soviet gave its adherence to Kerensky. Six months later those very troops, permeated with propaganda, were in the forefront of the insurrection. 'The troops were called in to conquer Petrograd; but in the end Petrograd conquers them.'

The record of these six months of 1917 is one of democratic inefficiency, in the face of ceaseless revolutionary efficiency, directed by the greatest mechanic of revolution known to history, Lenin. Still, the democrats put up a fight that did not lack vigour—in words. The militant reformer Mikhailovsky stigmatized the class-struggle, which is the soul of Leninism, as a 'school of bestiality from which men issue as live corpses, with faces distorted with rage.' The distortion of rage has now been witnessed, for eleven ensuing years, through Leninist Russia; but the corpses have proved to be singularly alive. Rage was at work already in that summer of 1917, when Russia was drawing her first breath of freedom, after the fall of the autocracy, and when 'nothing

seemed impossible to a great nation which had come to its own, after centuries of bondage.' Lenin might be in hiding; Trotzky might be in prison; but the propaganda of class hatred went on, without ceasing. And Lenin proved himself indomitable in defeat, no less than in victory. The Soviet Central Executive Committee, elected by the All Russian Congress of Soviets, had swung from 'left' to 'right,' in other words was supporting Kerensky. Lenin instantly altered his own tactics, and demanded, from his secret headquarters, the destruction of the existing Soviet. He even dropped the watchword, 'All power to the Soviets.' And he directed the next assault on the Democratic Provisional Government under the slogan of 'Up with the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.' Then Kerensky, by a fatal effort to establish a military autocracy, with the aid of General Kornilov, gave the minority leader an opportunity he was quick to seize. From the negative attitude of merely dropping the slogan 'All power to the Soviets,' Lenin advanced to the issue of a new slogan—'Conquer the Soviets from within,'—those Soviets now allied with the Democratic Provisional Government. To conquer the erring Soviets 'from within'—this was the kind of stratagem in which his acute mind delighted: 'Ilyich liked stratagem especially. To take in the enemy, to get the better of him—was there anything better than that?'¹ So, from his

¹ Trotzky, *Lenin*, p. 123.

secure hiding place in Finland, he offered a truce to the Democratic Soviet Committee, in return for 'absolute freedom of propaganda.'

In less than three months the conquest from within, by means of this absolute freedom of propaganda, was effected. The minority party of the Bolsheviki were transformed into a majority in the Moscow Soviet. On September 23 Trotzky was elected chairman of the Petrograd Soviet. In the same month Lenin promulgated his theory of a Republic of Soviets. Six months earlier he had put forward the idea that Councils, or Soviets, might be utilized as a new form of popular representation, as 'the embryo of a new organization of the State.'¹ Now Lenin reaffirmed this new political formula; although he was careful to reserve a place therein for a Constituent Assembly. The idea of a Constituent Assembly had been the desired goal of the Russian people for two generations. Knowing this, Lenin, with his unerring tactical skill, launched his slogan of 'All power to the Soviets' as 'an indispensable preliminary to the convocation of the Constituent Assembly.'²

The next strategic step was hastened by Lenin's fear that the Provisional Government might garrison Petrograd with 'loyal' troops, before his capture 'from within' of the Soviets had been completely consolidated. He left Finland; and at

¹ M. Farbman, *Bolshevism in Retreat*, p. 146.

² Trotzky, *Lenin*, p. 123.

the end of September, or early in October, attended a night session of the Communist party, held in a house in Petrograd. All night Lenin urged that power must be seized at once, and by armed force. He imposed his will upon the secret gathering with 'intense and impassioned improvisations, which were filled with the struggle to impress upon the opponents, the hesitating, the doubting, the course of his thought, his will, his conviction, his courage.'¹ That night the fate of the Russian Revolution was decided. The meeting broke up late, and 'all felt,' says Trotzky, 'somewhat as though they had gone through an operation.'

On October 9 Lenin issued a manifesto declaring that 'the crisis is ripe, and there can be no doubt that we are standing at the gates of the proletarian World Revolution.' By October 25 Trotzky was able to report that, already, important strategic points in Petrograd were secured. Lenin, still in hiding, and sometimes in disguise, continually bombarded his party with Press articles, pamphlets, and messages. On this last moment of preparation he concentrated all his powers of clearness and of precision, all his grasp of reality. He utilized, now, the ceaseless work begun from the very first days of his arrival in Petrograd—the work of the student in gaining detailed knowledge of the economic and political conditions of the city; and the work, in organization, of the skilful

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

commander. It was Lenin, alone, who had drawn up the scheme of action of his party in all its details as regards military policy, economic policy, food policy, long before he launched the revolution on the night of November 7. It was Lenin who brought into line all who doubted or hesitated.¹

On Sunday, November 4, six enormous mass meetings were held in Petrograd; and Trotzky assumed control of a Military Revolutionary Committee. The Democratic Provisional Government called in troops such as the Zenith Battery and the Cyclists' Battalion. As the columns marched towards the city they were met by Communist missionaries, who attacked them, not with guns, but with ideas, and by a withering fire of arguments and pleading; and the troops that were being rushed into the city to crush the Revolution, became its supporters. Even the Cossacks succumbed. 'Brother Cossacks,' ran the appeal, 'you are being incited against us by grafters, parasites, landlords, to crush our Revolution. Comrade Cossacks, do not fall in with the plan!' The appeal prevailed; and the Cossacks also lined up under the red flag of revolt. The Military Revolutionary Committee was further reinforced by another Committee, '*the Committee of a Hundred Thousand*,'—that is, the masses themselves. 'There are no by-streets, no barracks, no buildings, where this committee does not penetrate. It reaches into the Kerensky Government, into the intelli-

¹ Zinovieff, *Nicolai Lenin*, 1918, p. 43.

gentsia. With porters, waiters, cabmen, conductors, soldiers, sailors it covers the city like a net. They hear everything, report everything to headquarters. Thus forewarned they can checkmate every move of the enemy. Every attempt to strangle or sidetrack the Revolution they paralyse at once.'¹ At last Kerensky attacked Lenin openly as a 'state criminal.' Lenin instantly counter-attacked, by emerging from his place of hiding. He arrived at the *Smolny Institute*, surrounded by an enthusiastic crowd. The *Smolny* was then fortified by an armed guard. The Commandant was a delicate-featured, fair-haired Pole, with a winning smile, whose name was to become a byword of terror, Felix Dzerjinsky.

On November 5 it was reported that the officers in command of the fortress of Peter and Paul, the guns of which command the whole of Petrograd, were intending to support the Democratic Government. Trotzky proposed to capture the fortress 'from within' by propaganda. He went himself; and after his speech the entire garrison declared for the Minority Bolshevik Movement. The last military stronghold of Democracy in Petrograd had fallen, without a single shot being fired. On the following day Kerensky and his Ministers retired to the Winter Palace. On the night of November 7 the *All Russian Congress of Soviets* assembled for its second sitting, in the *Smolny Institute*. The faith of the people in the power of

¹ A. R. Williams, *Through the Russian Revolution*, p. 95.

their new Soviets to bring them freedom was still strong. An American eye-witness has recorded how he saw, that night, a labourer shabbily clothed and gaunt—bread queues were already standing outside the bakers' shops in Petrograd—plodding down the street. Lifting his head, suddenly the poor workman saw the massive façade of the *Smolny*, with a hundred lighted windows, glowing golden through the falling snow. Pulling off his cap he stood for a moment with bared head and outstretched arms. Then crying out: *The Commune! The People! The Revolution!* he ran forward towards the building. During the night, as the roar of the naval guns bombarding the Democratic Government in the Winter Palace sounded over the city, the delegates to the *All Russian Congress of Soviets*, led by Trotzky, shouted down those who protested against civil war; as the protesters left the Congress, Trotzky cried: 'Let them go. They are refuse that will be swept into the garbage heaps of history.' The Congress remained in the hands of the Bolsheviks, and as the night wore on, news poured into the *Smolny* of the arrest of the members of the Government; of the seizure of the State Bank, and also of the telegraph and telephone stations; and of the capture of the staff headquarters. The whole structure of government was falling under the hammer strokes of the insurgents. A mud-bespattered Commissioner mounted the Congress platform to announce his message: 'The garrison

of Tsarskoyeselo declares for the Soviets.' Another message came in: 'The Cyclists' Battalion is for the Soviets; not a single man is found willing to shed the blood of his brothers.' Krylenko mounted the tribune, a telegram in his hand: 'Greetings to the Soviet from the XII Army. The Soldiers' Soviet is taking over the command of the Northern Front.' Throughout the night Lenin remained in his room at the *Smolny*. The room had hardly any furniture. Someone spread rugs on the floor, and laid two cushions on them. 'Vladimir Ilyich and I lay down to rest,' writes Trotzky, 'but in a few minutes I was called,—"Dan¹ is speaking, you must reply." When I came back again I lay down near Vladimir Ilyich. Every five or ten minutes someone came running to inform us what was going on there. In addition, messages came from the city where the siege of the Winter Palace was going on.'² At last, towards dawn, the session of the Congress of the All Russian Soviets ended with the historic declaration:

'The Provisional Government is deposed. Based upon the will of the great majority of workers, soldiers, and peasants, the Congress of Soviets assumes power. The Soviet Authority will at once propose an immediate democratic peace to all nations, an immediate truce upon all points. It will assure the free transfer of lands from the landlords.'

¹ Dan was the leader of the Moderates in the Soviet Congress.

² Trotzky, *Lenin*, p. 126.

The work of the German diplomats who had despatched Lenin and his comrades in the sealed train to Petrograd was accomplished ; the Russian army was put out of action.

A few hours earlier the news had arrived of the capture of the Winter Palace, and of the removal of the Democratic Government, sheltering therein, to the Petropaul fortress. When morning came, ' Vladimir Ilyich looked tired,' writes Trotzky. ' He smiled and said, " the transition from the state of illegality, being driven in every direction, to power, is too rough." Then he added, in German, " It makes me dizzy," and made the sign of the cross before his face. After this he went about the tasks of the day.'

The first task of Lenin's new day was the breaking up of that democratic Constituent Assembly, towards which the hopes of the unhappy Russian people had turned for two generations. Fully aware of these hopes Lenin had roused the people to seize ' all power for the Soviets,' on the treacherous plea that the Soviets were the only means by which the Constituent Assembly could be convoked. The Soviet power was duly seized, on the night of November 7. At once Lenin threw down his scaling ladders, remarking, ' Naturally we must break up the Constituent Assembly.' The people, who were still intent on their long-desired national parliament, were prepared for Lenin's volte-face by an article in

Pravda, which was issued on November 8, on the day following the destruction of the Provisional Government ; for the hammer blows of Lenin always fell swiftly. This article admitted that a Constituent Assembly did indeed represent the highest form of democracy ; but went on to declare that the Soviets represented a still higher idea of government ; and announced, further, that they were the only possible form, during the transition from a bourgeois State to Socialism.¹ Here we have the authentic Leninist touch, the hand of the man who always kept close to reality.

Policy, in action, followed rapidly on propaganda. The Constituent Assembly, admittedly the ' highest form of democracy,' was duly convoked for January 18, 1918. The delegates gathered from all parts of Russia, not without apprehension of Bolshevik intentions. ' In the nature of things,' writes Trotzky, betraying a fine scorn of the people, ' these little citizens from the provinces did not know at all what they should do. The greater part were simply afraid. But they carefully prepared the ritual for the first meeting. They brought candles with them, in case the Bolsheviks should cut off the electric light ; and a vast number of sandwiches, in case their food should be taken from them. Thus democracy entered into the struggle with dictatorship, heavily armed with sandwiches and candles.'²

The first session of the doomed Assembly had

¹ *Pravda*, November 8, 1917.

² Trotzky, *Lenin*, p. 149.

hardly opened when the delegates were asked to confirm the Soviets in power, as the new rulers of Russia ; and to ratify all the decrees, promulgated since the imprisonment of the Democratic Provisional Government. These arbitrary demands were flatly refused ; and the delegates then settled down, as they conceived, to business. Their discussions were prolonged far into the night. As morning approached the doors were flung open, a squad of sailors of the Red Fleet marched into the hall, and the selected representatives of the Russian nation were summarily ejected. Lenin's own words are the fittest record of this achievement : ' The breaking up of the Constituent Assembly, by the Soviet Power, is the complete and public liquidation of formal democracy.'¹ To Trotzky, also, it seemed that the young Russian democracy was already overthrown : ' A small and miserable demonstration of the rearguard of " democracy " departed from the scene, armed with candles and sandwiches. *Finis !*'

Certainly the gates of Russian democracy had been broken down ; and not only by force of reasoning. The arguments of Lenin, at this critical moment, as Trotzky observes, ' went hand in hand ' with the transfer to Petrograd of a Lettish regiment on which the Dictator knew that he could rely. Many of the delegates had come from the vast rural areas of Russia. ' The

¹ Trotzky, *Lenin*, p. 150.

peasant may hesitate in this case,' Lenin said. ' Proletarian decision is necessary here.' Proletarian propaganda translated into action at the point of Lettish bayonets had every chance of success—so long as the bayonets remained pointed at a people armed only with sandwiches and candles. Trotzky sums up the events of the night of January 18 in one trenchant sentence : ' The further victorious development of the proletarian revolution, after the simple, open, brutal breaking-up of the Constituent Assembly, dealt formal democracy a finishing stroke, from which it never recovered.'

CHAPTER II

SOVIETS AND COMMISSARS

'Liberty is a bourgeois superstition.'—LENIN.

ON the night of November 7, 1917, the Democratic Provisional Government of Russia fell, to the sound of the guns of the Red Fleet. On the night of January 18, 1918, the still more democratic Constituent Assembly of Russia, which had been elected on a basis of manhood suffrage, was dispersed by sailors of the same Fleet. Ten days later, democracy being now 'liquidated,' the Third All Russian Congress of Soviets announced that all legislative and administrative powers had been taken over by the Soviets. 'All power' had, in reality, been taken over by a Council of eighteen Commissars.

These three events may be looked upon as three connected assaults, prepared and co-ordinated with faultless tactical skill, for the destruction of that young Russian democracy, which had hardly, as yet, outgrown the bonds of Tsardom. It is significant that the first assault, that made on the Provisional Government, was preceded by a *barrage* of propaganda, the results of which amply justified Lenin's remark that, although his party had been laughed at when they 'proposed to control guns with leaflets, the event had proved

the leaflets to be quite as powerful.'¹ The fusillade of Soviet propaganda had, indeed, begun as early as 1915, when Lenin announced that 'The Soviets of Workers' Deputies must be regarded as organs of revolt, and of revolutionary administration.'² Lenin sounded the same note, so alluring to a people hungry for freedom, again, eighteen months later, from his refuge in Zurich: 'The Russian people shall win freedom, and shall transfer political power entirely into the hands of the Soviets of Workers and Peasants.'³ Finally, in September 1917, theory and propaganda were allied to policy, and were thus made concrete. The assertion, irresistible to the Russian people in that year, was everywhere proclaimed that the capture of 'all power' by the Soviets would ensure the convocation of the popular idol, the Constituent Assembly; and the four slogans appealing to the four greatest needs at that moment of the Russian people were appropriated by the Bolshevik party:—*Peace, Food, Land, Liberty*. It was on the Soviets, as the immediate means of convoking the Constituent Assembly, that the workers and peasants of Russia had been induced to stake all their hopes of the conclusion of an unpopular and disastrous war, of the easing of the food shortage, and of the sating of their land hunger and of political freedom. Deluded by this

¹ Lenin, Interview with Mr. Bertrand Russell, *Theory and Practice of Bolshevism*, p. 21. Russell.

² Lenin, No. 47 of the *Geneva Social Democrat*, October 1915.

³ Lenin, *How to obtain Peace*, March 1917.

slogan of 'All power to the Soviets,' the people of Petrograd rose, as we have seen, on the night of November 7, and destroyed their own Democratic Provisional Government. But their long-desired Constituent Assembly tarried, still unborn. What happened in the interval?

The events of that dramatic moment, a moment on which depended more than the immediate fate of the Russian people, have been recorded by one of the chief actors in the drama, Trotzky: 'From the moment that the Provisional Government was overthrown Lenin officiated as the Government, in large things as well as small. We had as yet no apparatus; connexion with the country was lacking; the employers were on strike; telephone connexion with Moscow was cut; we had neither money, nor an army. But Lenin took hold of absolutely everything, by means of statutes, decrees, and commands, in the name of the Government.'¹ The whole State machine had been smashed, as the Bolshevik leader meant it to be smashed. The Government offices were deserted. Ministers were in the prison of Peter and Paul—that Bastille of Russian liberty, the cells of which are below the level of the waters of the Neva. Many of the officers of the army had been massacred. Among the rank and file, propaganda had done work more deadly than that of the revolvers of the assassins. All the threads of government, all the apparatus of administration

¹ Trotzky, *Lenin*, pp. 161 sqq.

had to be created by revolutionary improvisations. Trotzky shows us the manner of their creation: "What name shall we use?" Lenin considered, aloud, "Not *Ministers*—that is a repulsive, worn-out designation." "We might say *Commissars*," I suggested, "What about 'People's Commissars?—Councils of People's Commissars?'" "Councils of People's Commissars," Lenin repeated, "That is splendid. That smells of Revolution."¹

So, from the still-smoking ruins of the existing world in Russia,—'the Russian smash at the end of 1917 was certainly the completest that has ever happened to any modern social organisation,'²—there rose up, not the promised power of the Soviets of Workers and Peasants, but *Councils of People's Commissars*, created by the Dictatorship, or to be more historically accurate by the Dictator, of the Proletariat. It is not easy for an Englishman born and bred under a free democracy, which he has inherited from generations of sturdy ancestors, to realize either the political conditions of the old Russia, or the extent of the ruin wrought in the winter of 1917. 'Art, literature, science,' writes that distinguished Socialist Mr. H. G. Wells, 'all the refinements and elaborations of life, all that we mean by "civilization," were involved in that torrential catastrophe.' Everything had to be built up, from the beginning.—'We could not offer precedents,' says Trotzky,

¹ *Ibid.*

² H. G. Wells, *Russia in the Shadows*, p. 33.

'for history knew of none.' And, in the midst of that universal chaos, Lenin, as President of the Council of Commissars, sat daily, for five and six hours at a stretch, leading, controlling, dominating. From his Council room in the Smolny Institute, at Petrograd, decrees began instantly to issue,—the new orders for a new world of human relationships. The volumes of 'Soviet' Decrees form, indeed, a by no means unimportant part of the collected works of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. Even the People's Commissars were, when necessary, sharply brought to heel by their master. One of the members, Kameneff, had ventured to repeal the military death penalty. Lenin's anger flared out. 'How can we accomplish a revolution without shooting?' he cried. Like measure was meted out to certain unfriendly critics in the Russian Press. 'Shall we not tame this pack?' exclaimed Lenin. 'For God's sake what kind of a dictatorship is this?' That was the language of the Council room. In the streets the people were told that the decrees of the Commissars were merely temporary measures pending the convening, in the name of the Soviet, of their Constituent Assembly.

The real power of the Soviets had, of course, been effectively mined by the creation of the Council of Commissars. The mine was not, however, immediately exploded. The authority of the Soviets, on which the people of Russia so tragically relied, was needed for the destruction of the Constituent Assembly. This final act of

demolition was a task the immediate necessity of which Lenin had never, for a moment, doubted; and on the morning of January 19, Russia woke up to find herself a 'Soviet Republic,' administered by eighteen Commissars. Within a few months the people of Russia were to discover, in the Soviet system, the most perfect political smoke screen ever devised by the brain of man. It is true that this elaborate system, with its occupational constituencies, its 'right of recall' of delegates, its intricate chain of elections, appeared to be more closely linked up with the 'toiling majority of the people' than any previous method of representation. The village and factory Soviets were to be elected by the peasants and workers, all employers and other capitalists and all the clergy being disfranchised. These Soviets elected, in their turn, local and district Soviet Congresses. These, again, selected the All Russian Soviet Congress, which body finally elected an Executive Committee ordained to sit in perpetual session and to control the People's Commissars. The entire conception was hailed as a 'real addition to existing political ideas'; as 'an important international phenomenon.' It was frequently described by Lenin as the most perfect organ for ascertaining and registering the will of the people. For the first time, in the history of the world, it seemed as though naught hindered but that the will of the people should prevail. What did, in fact, prevail was the will of Lenin.

Is it possible that Lenin, with his genius for political reality, was unaware of the fact that the Soviets, ever since their political debut in Russia, had shown themselves to be incapable of ruling? Had the master mechanic of revolution created the Soviets as an instrument for the seizure, *but not for the retention*, of power? From their origin the Soviets had made no effort to assume the ruling power. In the spring of 1917, when Lenin first launched the idea that the Soviets might be the embryo of a new State organization, they were themselves repudiating any such activities. They refused to form a Ministry when invited to do so by the Provisional Government. The Soviets at their early meetings, says Demianov, 'made absolutely no pretension to the rôle of the State ruling power.'¹ Assumption of such power 'was quite contrary to their intention.' Mr. Michael Farbman, who applauds the Bolshevik 'spirit of limitless daring,' and who considers Bolshevism to be 'the road of destiny,' is quite frank about the results of the ceaseless propaganda of 'All power to the Soviets.' He says: 'the power, which was seized in the name of the Soviets, was now vested solely in the Communist Party. The Soviets in whose name the country was governed reigned, but never ruled.'² It is Zinovieff, the friend and colleague of Lenin, from the days when both were hunted revolutionaries, who has told us that 'In Lenin's view the Soviets were organizations for

¹ Demianov, *Archives of the Russian Revolution*.

² M. Farbman, *Bolshevism in Retreat*.

the seizure of State power.'¹ Zinovieff adds, it is true, that Lenin desired that the Soviets should enable the workers to become the ruling class. If this were so, it was a desire which, during five years of supreme power, the Dictator allowed to remain unfulfilled.

This gigantic fable of the Soviet power, of the Soviet Government of Russia, created by Lenin, still lives; and it is still used by the present rulers of Russia, the successors of Lenin, in all their international propaganda, to win the support of that democracy which they privately glory in having destroyed. Caught by the glamour of the phrase 'The Workers' and Peasants' Republic' many workers in England and in other countries, to-day, march in procession to the rhythmical shout of 'The Soviets! the Soviets!' It were well if they took to heart the warning of Maxim Gorki—'We have been starving for freedom. We may very easily devour our freedom.' It is in the name of the Soviets that the freedom of Russia has been devoured. It is in the name of the Soviets that the gates of Russian democracy have been forced, and that the arbitrary dictatorship of a group of international Commissars has been installed within the walls of the Kremlin. It is in the name of the Soviets that this international dictatorship retains its power to-day.

It is also in the name of the Soviets, and in

¹ Zinovieff, *Nicolai Lenin*, p. 24.

unity with the 'Soviet' Government of Russia, that workers throughout the world are being encouraged to plunge into a universal 'class war,' in order that all countries may achieve the Russian results. In the interests of democracy, therefore, a summary of these results has become essential. That ardent Communist, Mr. Bertrand Russell, indeed goes further, and declares such an investigation to be imperative 'in the interests of civilization.' Mr. Russell's account of his visit to Russia in 1920, after the 'Soviet' system had been in unfettered operation for two years, is a historical document of exceptional value. He points out that 'advanced Socialists' are apt to think that 'proletariat' in Russia means proletariat, but that 'dictatorship' does not quite mean dictatorship. 'This,' he tells us, 'is the opposite of the truth. When a Russian Communist speaks of dictatorship he means the word literally; but when he speaks of the proletariat he means the word in a pickwickian sense.' Mr. Russell proceeds: 'When I went to Russia I imagined that I was going to see an interesting experiment in a new form of representative government. I did see an interesting experiment, but not in representative government.' Election to the Soviets being by a show of hands, it followed that any opponents of the frankly terrorist Government—'do you think that we can be victors without the most severe revolutionary terror?' Lenin had said,¹—were marked men.

¹ Trotzky, *Lenin*, p. 164.

Further, no candidate for election, except a Communist, could get any printing done, all printing works having been nationalized. No candidate except a Communist could make use of the Press, all newspapers having been nationalized. No candidate other than a Communist could address any indoor meetings, all public halls having been nationalized. And if such a candidate had, by superhuman tenacity, succeeded in being elected to a District or Central Soviet, he would be unable to serve thereon, as a railway pass would be denied him—all railways having been nationalized.¹ These, it may be observed by the way, are some interesting practical results of the nationalization of necessary public services.

The colossal fiction of government by the Soviets was not supported only by force. It was hardly possible even for a Lenin violently to enforce his will on a hundred million human beings, spread over one-sixth of the habitable globe. Compulsion was reinforced by the constant reiteration of seductive phrases, placarded at every street corner, instilled at countless meetings, announced from cinemas, declaimed from platforms, filling the newspapers, broadcasted by wireless,² decorating the very railway carriages. When Trotzky as Minister of War visited Ekaterinburg, in order to assist the

¹ Bertrand Russell, *The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism*, pp. 72 *seq.*

² It has been pointed out that, owing to its flatness, Russia is an ideal country for wireless.

work of turning regiments of the Red Army into conscripts of Labour, his train was covered with advertisements of Bolshevism and incitements to class hatred. These methods have been well described as 'the most extraordinary apparatus of propaganda the world has ever seen.' The people of Russia, and also the peoples of Europe and of the East, were told that the Soviets existed to 'suppress all exploitation of man by man.' The 'Soviet Republic' was affirmed to be a 'free alliance of free nations.' Declarations were made with sublime effrontery of the suppression of 'State coercion.' Guarantees, in the name of the Soviet Government, were announced of freedom for religious propaganda, freedom of the Press, and freedom for meetings. Decrees in the name of the Soviet Government were posted up in all public institutions, schools, stations, and colleges, and were published in all local papers. These decrees gave all land to the peasants; abolished private ownership; gave the control of industry to the workers; and ordered the disarming of the propertied classes, and the arming of the workers.¹ Everywhere the people were told that all authority was vested in the Soviets, that is, in themselves. Again it was proved that propaganda is more effective than rifles.

Finally it was announced that the Central Executive Committee, in the election of which

¹ *Declaration of the Third All Russian Congress of Soviets*, January 1918; and the Constitution of the Russian Soviet Republic promulgated in July 1918, and published in England in 1919.

the poorest workman and peasant had taken part, was given supreme power, even over the eighteen ruling People's Commissars. What more perfect safeguard for the liberties of the people could be devised? The flaw in the arrangement was that the same individuals sat on the Council of Eighteen Commissars and on the controlling Central Executive Committee. Lenin, Kameneff, Rykoff, and their colleagues, sitting as People's Commissars, were controlled by Rykoff, Kameneff, Lenin, and their colleagues, sitting as members of the supreme Executive Committee.¹ The following lists are conclusive on this point.

The People's
Commissars.
1923.

Lenin
Kameneff
Rykoff
Tsiurupa
Smirnov
Vladimirov
Kursky
Yakovenko
Belodorodov
Kiselev
Lunarcharsky
Bogdanov
Semashko

Central Executive Committee
in Control of the People's
Commissars.
1923.

Lenin
Kameneff
Rykoff
Tsiurupa
Smirnov
Vladimirov
Kursky
Yakovenko
Belodorodov
Kiselev
Lunarcharsky
Bogdanov
Semashko

It is by Lenin himself, chief architect of the edifice of the 'Soviet' Constitution, and of the substructure of propaganda and terrorism upon which it rests, that the results of his own and his colleagues' labours in those early months of 1918

¹ *Izvestia*, December 28, 1922, and July 8, 1923.

are best summed up: 'Just as a hundred and fifty thousand landowners, under Tsarism, dominated one hundred and thirty million peasants, so two hundred thousand members of the Bolshevik party are imposing their proletarian will on the masses.'¹

Certainly it is difficult for the English workers, when constantly assailed by reports of the happy freedom of their Russian comrades, to realize that this freedom lasted only for a few months during 1917, before the advent of the Soviet Government, and has not since been recovered. In March 1917 it was indeed possible for the democrats of the world to rejoice with Russia. 'During the first days of the Revolution people all over Russia seemed so very happy and content. I shall always remember the genial smile on the face of every man I met in Petrograd or elsewhere at that time. All were sure that at last their day of happiness had arrived,' wrote a Petrograd professor. A year later, in March 1918, the day of Russian happiness seemed to have set for ever. Here is a page from the political life of a Russian village, early in the summer of that year, in which the basis of the so-called 'Soviet' Government is unveiled. An election to the local Soviet was due to take place in the village of Karagi, in the province of Perm. Speeches were delivered, on the village green, calling upon every free citizen of the 'Russian Federated Social Republic' to

¹ Lenin, April 1918.

exercise his or her new privilege of voting. A machine gun was set up, upon a bit of rising ground near by; and a line of soldiers of the Red Army was formed up across the village green. The villagers were told that to step to the hither side of the line was to vote for the Government, and that to step to the further side was to vote against the Government. Two peasants promptly moved to the further side of the line, saying that they would not vote for those who denied them the right of expressing their opinions. At this a halt was called, and these two men were at once arrested as enemies of the people, and were shot. Their still quivering bodies were hastily tumbled into a shallow hole; and then 'voting for the Soviet' was resumed, with the result that the whole population of the village recorded a unanimous vote for the Government candidate. This result was duly made known in the columns of the provincial Press, and also at Petrograd.

It will be objected that this was an isolated incident. Two months later, in the province of Kazan, the Congress of the Soviet of the Peasants was dissolved because its 'state of mind was antagonistic to the Government.'¹ In places where no 'Soviet' as yet existed the Government would send a group of Communists under a guard of Red soldiers, to form the Executive Committee of the non-existent electoral body. In one village where the peasant electors ventured a protest, twenty-one

¹ *Pravda*, August 6, 1918.

were shot, including the girl telegraph operator. Again, it may be objected that these were violent moments, mere accidentals of the first year of 'reconstruction.' A year later the officials of the province of Vladimir hastened to obey the following order: 'the names given below'—a list of Government Communist candidates followed—'must be elected. The non-fulfilment of this order will result in those responsible being severely punished.'¹ Yet another year later, and the Government, now firmly seated in the saddle,—there were moments in 1918 when Lenin admitted 'to-day we are only holding fast to the mane,'—published a decree openly prohibiting the election of any candidate other than a member of the Communist (Government) Party.² In the following year the districts of Tula, Briansk, Besitza, and Yaroslav witnessed the dissolution, by the Government, of entire Soviets, because the elected delegates were not members of the Government Party. In the same year, 1921, when the time came for the election of delegates to the Petrograd Soviet, the Government secret police arrested all the Social Democrats upon whom they could lay their hands.³ It is not surprising to read that the Soviet elections, which were frequent in 1918, had become, in 1920, very rare.

This clearly is a record of three years of consecutive policy, a policy of deliberate suppression

¹ *The Diel Naroda*, March 22, 1919.

² *Izvestia*, July 15, 1920.

³ *Socialisticheski Viestnik*, December 2, 1921.

of the essential rights of democracy. It was a policy which called forth the spirited protest of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald and Mr. A. Henderson and their colleagues, at the Labour Congress of May 1923, a protest formulated in the shape of a demand to the Soviet Government, 'which calls itself a Workers' Government,' to abandon 'the system of terroristic party dictatorship, and to adopt a regime of political freedom and democratic self-government of the people.' The record of the year 1925 is even more conclusive evidence of the total suppression of electoral liberty among a people that only ten years ago had attained to the possession of manhood suffrage. In January of that year a decree was signed by Kalinin, President of the Union of Soviet and Socialist Republics, as the present Commissar Government still calls itself, instructing all the Republics under the Union to cancel all elections of candidates of whom the Government authorities did not approve; to cause new Soviets to be 'elected,' under strict control; and further, to quash these re-elections, should they still prove to be unsatisfactory.

Lenin had promised to the unhappy Russian people that they should 'win freedom, and transfer political power entirely into the hands of the Soviet.' The transfer of political power was indeed complete; but it was through the impotent hands of the Soviets, who had always shown themselves incapable of holding power, into the iron grip of the Communist Commissar Government.

In this process the freedom, so tragically enjoyed by Russia during the few months of 1917, has, indeed, been entirely devoured. A member of the English Labour Party has summed up both Russia's loss, and Russia's present enslavement: 'We rejoiced when universal adult suffrage was bestowed upon the Russian people by the Kerensky (Provisional) Government. The present Russian Government has ruthlessly destroyed the popular franchise, and set in its place a brutal autocracy, that has waded through blood, murder, and disease.'¹

With the destruction of the Provisional Government, the further destruction of the Constituent Assembly, and the erection of the impotent Soviets as a mask for the autocracy of the eighteen ruling Commissars, guided by the master-hand of Lenin, Russia lay stripped and bleeding, and ready for the application, forthwith, of the pure doctrine of Communism.

It may be protested that a record of results strays from the allotted path, when diverging, for the space of two chapters, into historical narrative. As well might a record of the Pyramids omit to mention the Pharaohs. It may be added that the racial characteristic of the Soviet pyramid is that, for eleven years, aided by dexterous juggling, it has remained balanced upon its point. And that point is Lenin.

¹ Mr. J. Maxton, M.P.

CHAPTER III

THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT AND RELIGION

'I have given my heart to the Russian people, my soul to God.'
Speech, before his execution, by the
Metropolitan Bishop of Petrograd, 1923.

THE 'sunniest of revolutions' with its Democratic Provisional Government had brought to the Russian people, for the brief space of six months, something even better than political freedom. The Provisional Government proclaimed, in May 1917, complete liberty of conscience throughout Russia. The Orthodox Russian Church obtained independence of State control, and sought reorganization under a prelate for whom was revived the ancient title of Patriarch. The Catholic Church, freed from hostile State interference, carried forward the apostolate of the Faith, under Archbishop Cieplak. Freedom of action was given to sects such as the Baptists and the Methodists, no less than to the strange cults in which Russia has always been prolific.

Those summer months of 1917, so full of hope for the Russian people, passed into an autumn of gathering storm clouds, presaging the tornado that was to destroy all things in its track. The storm, as we have seen, broke in November. By the spring of 1918 few characteristics of civilized life remained in the vast area extending from the shores

of the Baltic to the Black Sea. The administration in the name of the People's Commissars was firmly established. Personal liberty had vanished. No man or woman knew, when they left their home in the morning, whether they would return to it in the evening. The elementary needs of physical life, food, clothing, firing, were disappearing; and a food dictatorship was in control.¹ Means of communication, whether by road, rail, letter, or telegram, were precarious. Disease was rife. The living were becoming accustomed to the not infrequent sight of the unburied dead. One thing, alone, remained stable, in universal chaos. The new Government of Russia was indeed imbued with the intention of carrying through 'the most ardent propaganda against religion.'² But, as yet, the open practice of Christianity in the land so long known to the world as 'holy Russia' was permitted. The Orthodox clergy continued their ministrations. Wherever a Catholic church or chapel stood, there the priest remained, bringing the sacraments to his people and saying the daily Mass as calmly as if the fierce tides of revolution were not roaring and swirling round his church.

The respite was one of tactics, not of indifference. The Council of People's Commissars, controlled by Lenin, even the Petrograd Soviet controlled by Zinovieff, were merely waiting,

¹ Decree of May 13, 1918.

² *The ABC of Communism*. An official publication of the Soviet Government. Moscow, 1919. Par. 91: 'The Soviet power must exert the most fervent propaganda against religion.'

nervous of explosions of popular anger, should religion be openly attacked. But this period of waiting did not in any way imply the least divergence from the axiom of the Soviet Government, 'Religion and Communism are incompatible, both theoretically and practically.'¹ The interval was brought to an end as soon as the people of Russia had been sufficiently terrorized by that administrative machine, the name of which has become ominously familiar throughout the world, the *Cheka*. The *Cheka*, now known as the *Ogpu*, is an Extraordinary Commission, instituted in accordance with Lenin's conviction of the 'absolute necessity of terror.'² Lenin did not hesitate to make brutal and public affirmation of this conviction. In a speech delivered in 1920 before the Third International he declared quite simply and openly, 'the Dictatorship of the Proletariat is unthinkable without terror.'³ The headquarters of this Extraordinary Commission are at Moscow; and the organization was controlled, until his death in 1926, by one of the principal Ministers of the Soviet Government, Dzerjinsky. During the first five years of Dzerjinsky's administration of the *Cheka* the total number of executions carried out, throughout Russia, by his agents, was 1,700,000 persons; and, in innumerable cases, torture had been applied. Branch *Chekas* are

¹ Bukharin, *Pravda*, April 1923.

² Trotzky, *Lenin*, p. 164.

³ Lenin's speech at a sitting of the Third International, Moscow, July 30, 1920.

established in all towns, and even in villages, and have plenary powers. Thus at Kiev two hundred executions took place daily in January 1919, 124 victims being killed in one night in the cellars of the office of the *Cheka* in Sadowa Street. Up to September 1919 the Petrograd *Cheka* had executed 1,500 persons; and it is of interest to record that only some 140 out of the 400 Petrograd delegates of the democratic Constituent Assembly were left alive. In December 1919 the executions of the Moscow *Cheka* averaged 30 per night. As Mr. Bertrand Russell frankly states, the *Chekas* had power to imprison any man or woman without trial; and had spies everywhere. In 1919 the whole population was under fear of denunciation and of a horrible death. In 1920 a member of the Labour Party Delegation then visiting Russia, Dr. Haden Guest, said 'the atmosphere of Russia at the present time is one of terror.' During the autumn of 1920 5,000 persons were shot in Petrograd. In 1921 the prisons in Petrograd were, presumably, becoming overcrowded, so the Soviet Government took 600 prisoners, despatched them to Kronstadt, loaded them on to barges, and then sank them. These are a few illustrations of the basic means of Soviet government. They can be multiplied a thousand-fold, from the evidence of Soviet records.¹

It was this atmosphere, an atmosphere achieved

¹ See *infra*, Chapter V, 'The Soviet Government and Liberty.'

by the ruthless application of the Red Terror, as Dzerjinsky himself called his Department, which enabled the Soviet Government to prosecute freely its policy of religious persecution. Within twelve months the conditions created in Russia were those of the Roman Empire under Nero and Diocletian. In two years, from 1918 to 1920, 26 Archbishops and Bishops of the Orthodox Russian Church and 6,775 priests were massacred. The Archbishop of Perm was buried alive, after having had his eyes put out and his face slashed. The Archbishop of Tobolsk was drowned, after enduring two months of penal servitude. The Bishop of Belgarod was subjected to horrible mockery, and then plunged into quicklime. The Bishop of Youriew was thrown into a basement with other prisoners: there his nose and ears were cut off, he was struck many times with a bayonet, and finally cut to pieces; the Archbishop of Varoneje was hung before the altar of the Church of the Monastery of S. Mitrofan. In the government of Varoneje 160 priests were shot. In the government of Cherson three priests won the glorious privilege of sharing the sentence of Christ, and were crucified. A priest at Tcherdin was stripped of his clothing, in the Russian winter, and was then sprinkled with cold water, until he became a statue of ice. In the single diocese of Harkov seventy priests were put to death. The Archimandrite Ornatsky was shot, with his two sons. The Soviet Government officials asked him,

'Which shall be shot first, you or your sons?' He answered, 'My sons.' While they were being shot Ornaty knelt, reading the prayers for the dying. A platoon of the Red Army soldiers refused to fire; a second squad also refused; finally a Soviet Commissar stepped forward and killed him. Archbishop Feofan, who was known for the sanctity of his life, was brought to a dying condition, and then thrown into a hole in the ice of a frozen river and drowned. A group of sailors of the Red Fleet, watching a religious procession, said, 'We would kill all these clergy; but we do not want to soil our hands with the blood of such vermin as Christ's priests.'¹ The number of priests massacred by agents of the Soviet Government in 1920 was 1,275. It is difficult for men and women living outside Russia to realize that these things were happening less than ten years ago. It is difficult for English men and women to realize that they happened under the direction of a so-called Government which England had officially recognized, and the representative of which has been permitted to occupy the Russian Embassy in London.

Two years later, in 1922, fifty-four priests and deacons, together with some members of the laity of the Orthodox Church, were put on trial in Petrograd; eleven were condemned to death, and five were executed. Death sentences on Christians

¹ R. Courtier-Foster in the *Times* of December 9, 1919, corroborated in a written reply by Mr. Bonar Law of December 11, 1919. Also Maitre Aubert of the Geneva Bar.

were also given at Novgorod, Novocherkask, and Shouya. Men and women were shot down when attempting to defend the churches from desecration. In Moscow there were wholesale arrests of priests of the Orthodox Church. Further, in February of this year, a decree was launched for the confiscation of all Church property, including altar vessels. The plea put forward by the Government was that of the famine; and the Churches responded by putting their possessions freely at the disposal of the famine relief funds, with the single reservation of the altar vessels needed for public worship. Agents of the *Cheka*, however, insisted on wholesale sacrilege, with the result of deep popular resentment and rioting, speedily repressed by the bayonets of the Red Army. The fact that the Government treasury, in the Kremlin, contained jewels valued, by an American expert, at one billion gold roubles, disposes of the Government assertion that the decree of confiscation was necessary to meet the needs of the famine; as does the further fact that altar vessels of no value were wantonly broken up. In December of this year a Government circular was issued authorizing the use of all churches in Russia for lectures, concerts, balls, and theatrical representations.¹ Soldiers of the Red Army were employed to drive the congregations out of the churches which had been closed, and did their work with great brutality. In the persecutions

¹ Circular of the Soviet Government 200, Par. 1. December 1921.

under the Roman emperors those Christians who were maltreated, but not killed, bore the name of *floridi*, or *rubri*, the 'crimson witnesses.' There were many Christian *floridi* in Russia in 1922.¹

Following on the onslaught on the Orthodox Church came the attack on the Catholics. The Catholic priests were thrown into prison; and the laity were cruelly persecuted even when, as in Petrograd, the majority were working men and women. Twelve months later the civilized world was horrified with the news of the trial of the Catholic Archbishop of Petrograd, Monsignor Cieplak, together with seventeen priests, followed by death sentences on the Archbishop and on Monsignor Budkievicz. The wild passions of revolutionary violence might be pleaded in excuse of the massacres of 1918; no such plea could be put forward on behalf of the considered action of the Soviet Government of 1923.

The proceedings opened by the sudden transfer on the night of March 2 of all the accused from Petrograd to Moscow. The square in front of the Nicolas station, at Petrograd, was filled with working men and women, many of whom were in tears, and who all knelt, as the train moved out, to

¹ The efforts of the Soviet authorities, never lacking in subtlety, to 'Sovietize' the Orthodox Church have met with so little success that the so-called 'Living' or 'Reformed' Church needs only a passing mention. Some renegade Orthodox clergy were induced to attempt the establishment of a hierarchy abjectly dependent on an atheist government. This paradox did little credit to their faith or their reason. The latest effort of the Government appears to have been the imprisonment and subsequent submission of the unhappy Metropolitan Sergius, who is reported to have bartered his Church to the Soviets in a pact drawn up in August 1927.

receive the last blessing of their Archbishop. On arrival at Moscow the Archbishop and the priests were conveyed through the streets in an open lorry. The trial began on March 21, and was elaborately staged for 'Red' effects. The Court sat in the Hall of the Red Trade Unions. The judges included two Ministers of the Soviet Government and the case for the Soviet Government was led by the Public Prosecutor, Krylenko. An eye-witness has placed on record a vivid picture of the procedure; and of the sharply defined contrast, in demeanour, of the uneasy and slovenly Soviet officials, and the cultivated and serene group of priests who stood facing torture and death not only with suavity, but with a radiant confidence. These were men who knew themselves to be, as Archbishop Cieplak reminded Krylenko, the guardians of 'that divine truth, which now for near two thousand years has been the light of the world.' One of the prisoners, Father Edward Yunevich, a White Russian, twenty-nine years old, was known among the children of his parish as the 'angel priest.' The smile that won him that title was on his face through all the brutalities of the trial. Repeatedly the prisoners gave answers in a tone 'so bold and joyous that the Red Judges looked up in surprise.' Their surprise would have been less had they known enough of Roman history to be acquainted with the divine energy of the Christian martyrs of the Roman world who, glad and fearless, 'gave their bodies for God's sake

to death.' A young layman, a Lithuanian lad, was included in the charge. His face, we read, was lighted up by a 'glow of supernatural fire'; his head was thrown back, and 'his bright eyes seemed fixed, not on anything in that Red Court, but on some celestial vision beyond.' It was this boy who answered the presiding judge, when questioned why he had not left a certain church when the Red soldiers were driving out the people: 'When I saw that it was dangerous to stay in the church, I remained, with the other Christians, so as to give a good example; and we all knelt down and sang prayers.' This record is almost in the same words as that of an eye-witness of the persecutions under Nero: 'The Christians seemed no longer in the body. They saw things which eye hath not seen. They were no longer men but angels.'

The audience in the Court was mainly Communist; and included women luxuriously dressed, and wearing costly jewellery; it was a crowd that applauded the demand for death sentences. The presence also of a very different class of auditor is worth recording, for no more vivid picture could be imagined of the state of religious intolerance prevailing in Soviet Russia in 1923: 'I entered into conversation with a half-starved youth of eighteen or nineteen who informed me that he was a deacon of the Catholic Church. In other words, he was one of those young men who are now studying for the priesthood in Moscow under

conditions which must approximate closely to the conditions under which the studies of candidates for the Christian priesthood were carried on at Rome, in the time of Marcus Aurelius. These students can only study in the evening or at night, for by day they are employees in Soviet offices or factories, or perhaps tailors, shop boys, or unskilled labourers. They live together and pray together, but they must needs pray cautiously, for everywhere in Moscow there are sharp ears listening for the sound of prayer. How they manage to do any work is beyond my comprehension, for they lack books, candles, fuel, food.'¹ Throughout the trial the determination of the Soviet Government to destroy religion was evident; a determination tersely recapitulated by a leading member of the Soviet administration, Zinovieff, eighteen months later: 'We will grapple with the Lord God in due season. We shall vanquish him in his highest Heaven.'² The rancorous intolerance of the judges appeared very clearly in the expression of savage hate—that hate which the Soviet Minister of Education has said to be so necessary,—which appeared on their faces, when looking at the prisoners. The Government Prosecutor, Krylenko, allowed himself to break out into a fury of anti-religious hatred. 'I spit on your religion,' he cried, 'as I do on all religions—on Orthodox,

¹ F. McCullagh, *The Bolshevik Persecution of Christianity*, p. 145. I am indebted to this invaluable record, by an eye-witness, for this account of the trial.

² Zinovieff, *Christmas Appeal to Fight Religion*, December 1924.

Jewish, Mohammedan, and the rest.' Krylenko further declared that to pray is a 'counter-revolutionary act.' Hate and fury failed to disturb the victims. Monsignor Budkiewicz did no more than represent each one of his fellow prisoners as he stood, looking 'as sure of his principles as ever, and as little inclined to make any concession to the temporary insanity raging around him, as a British Governor of the Gold Coast would be inclined to worship a fetish, and wear a loin cloth.' The comparison is interesting. Precisely the same analogy occurred to Mr. H. G. Wells when he wrote that men of letters could no more live in Russia under the Soviet Government than they could in a Kaffir kraal.¹

The trial closed on the night of Palm Sunday, March 25, 1923, after Archbishop Cieplak, speaking for all his fellow prisoners, had solemnly affirmed, 'standing on the threshold of death,' that none of the prisoners had been actuated by any 'counter-revolutionary' or political aims. This statement was frankly anticipated by that of the Government journal, the *Bezbojnik* (the 'Godless'), when it announced that the death of all the priests under trial was necessary because their Catholic Faith was the principal enemy of Atheist Communism.² The judgements, with the two death sentences, were given at midnight. The Archbishop gave to the people, who protested in

¹ H. G. Wells, *Russia in the Shadows*, p. 45.

² *Bezbojnik*, March 18, 1923.

the Court, his blessing—'Benedicat vos Omnipotens Deus'; and all the priests were hurried into the covered motor-lorry which was used indifferently for conveying prisoners from the Lubyanka Prison to the court, and for conveying dead bodies out of the prison after execution.

Telegrams of protest poured into the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs, from the Vatican, England, France, Italy, the United States, Germany, Spain, Switzerland, the Argentine, Belgium, indeed from the whole world. Dr. Walsh, the priest representative of the Vatican, requested, in accordance with 'the ordinary usage in every civilized country,' permission to visit the condemned men for two hours before their execution. He received no answer. Late on the night of Good Friday his telephone bell rang four times, but the only sounds which came through were savage laughter and ribald singing. It seems probable that the ring was from No. 11 Bolshoi Lubyanka, for it was in a cellar of this prison that Monsignor Budkiewicz was murdered during the night. The usual Soviet barbarity of execution was employed. The Monsignor was stripped naked, and then shot through the back of the head, so that his face should be unrecognizable. His body was wrapped in a cloth, and taken in a motor-lorry to Sokolniki, a suburb of Moscow, where it was buried together with the bodies of nine thieves. As his body was being hurried to that infamous grave, the priest of every Catholic Church throughout the world was

singing the Easter Mass of that 'most sacred night,' the *noctem sacratissimum* of the Resurrection; bidding the hosts of heaven and the angels to rejoice since the darkness overspreading the whole world had been chased away in the splendour of the risen Christ. The darkness hanging over Soviet Russia was irradiated from that Easter night, not only by the shining light of martyrdom. Burning protests flashed from every civilized country in the world. The Soviet persecutors, with the invariable cowardice of cruelty, thereupon drew back. The protests came too late to save Monsignor Budkiewicz from the midnight assassins of the Lubyanka. But the death sentence on Archbishop Cieplak was commuted to solitary confinement; and the life of Patriarch Tikhon was saved. It is characteristic of the mentality and the diction of the Soviet Government that the nobly worded protests, from the Governments and the Press of the world, were described as the cries of a 'chorus of counter-revolutionary jackals and hyenas.'

A week later a Requiem Mass was celebrated for the repose of the soul of Monsignor Budkiewicz in the Church of SS. Peter and Paul, at Moscow. Great Britain was officially represented; and outside the church, during the service, stood the car of the British Mission, flying the British flag—that flag beneath which religious freedom is inviolate. Within the church hung another flag on which were embroidered the words,

'Thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.'

The trial of Archbishop Cieplak and his eighteen fellow victims, followed by the martyrdom of Monsignor Budkiewicz and the savage sentences on the remaining priests, threw a brilliant searchlight over Soviet Russia, and manifested to the whole world the nature of the forces in control of the lives, but not the souls, of the Russian people. A protest was issued at once in the English Press signed by Cardinal Bourne, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, the leader of the Free Churches, the Moderator of the Church of Scotland, the General of the Salvation Army, and the Chief Rabbi. 'Never,' commented the *Times*, 'has such a united protest been made in defence of the fundamental principles of religion,' and in abhorrence of what the Soviet Government has declared to be its 'war on the denizens of Heaven.' The great English newspaper did not hesitate to state further that the 'power that now holds Russia in its grasp is a power that is fiercely opposed to spiritual freedom, and one that has struck a desperate blow at the very base of all human society.'

To recount all the acts of the Russian martyrs under the Soviet Government would need an *Acta Sanctorum* of many volumes. Just two incidents must suffice to show that young and old, and even children, were at one in defence of their

faith. A young engineer was badly wounded while endeavouring to check the profanation of a Midnight Mass, during the Christmas of 1921. He died a few hours afterwards. As he was dying he scrawled this message on a slip of paper: 'It is a most honourable privilege to be allowed to die for our dear Faith. We Russians seem to have this great honour now. May God be thanked.' Russia had reason to thank God also for the faith of her little children. In a suburban village, a few miles from Petrograd, four children, three boys and a girl, overheard some soldiers of the Red Army saying that they intended to raid the village church on the following night. The children got into the church, and watched all night, crouched upon the altar steps. As morning broke the soldiers came in, none too sober, to execute their orders, and ordered the children away. The boys said they were going to stay there, and to defend Christ; thereupon the soldiers fired. Two of the children, wounded, fell on the altar; the third boy, also wounded, was carried home. Before he died he told his mother that he had seen Christ, standing, smiling and radiant, and blessing with outstretched hands the children who had laid down their lives in his defence. The boy died, his face shining with happiness. *Salvete flores martyrum.*¹

In the summer of 1923, following the Moscow 'trial,' and the 'judicial murder' of Monsignor

¹ M. E. Almedingen, *The Catholic Church in Russia*, p. 130.

Budkiewicz, fifty-six Archbishops and Bishops, chiefly of the Orthodox Church, were in various prisons; and Archbishop Cieplak, an old man, was suffering the horrors of solitary confinement in a Soviet prison in a cell measuring 6 feet by 8 feet. In the autumn and winter came fresh arrests. At midnight on December 8 the Mother Superior of a Dominican Convent, together with the members of the Community, were brutally arrested by Red soldiers, in the presence of six Government agents, and taken to the foul cells of the Lubyanka Prison. Early in 1924 practically all the most prominent Baptist ministers were arrested and conveyed to an unknown destination. They were charged with a too zealous propaganda of religion; the teaching of religion being tantamount to the political offence of undermining the Soviet Government, 'since religion clashes directly with Communism.' The halls of the Salvation Army in Moscow and Petrograd had already been closed; and a consignment of 40,000 Bibles sent out by the Church Missionary Society was stopped at the frontier. Two young men who were preparing for the Catholic priesthood were also arrested, 'their only offence being that they studied and taught a religion which a Bolshevik decree prohibits.'

The Soviet Administration was particularly active in its warfare on religion during the year 1925. On January 1 the Council of Commissars published a decree ordering the immediate closing and 'liquidation' of all monasteries. In April an

anti-religious Conference was called, to sit in Moscow, and to work out a new programme of anti-religious agitation. In July eight priests were condemned to rigorous solitary confinement, for having arranged religious processions for pilgrims who had been erecting crosses. The Soviet Government was wise in its generation to dread the 'victorious emblem of the Cross.' In September the Administration demonstrated its perfect impartiality in religious persecution by seizing the principal synagogue in Kiev and handing it over to a Communist 'Godless' Club. The outraged Jews appealed to a higher Soviet authority at Harkov, only to have the decision of the Kiev Soviet confirmed. In this month, also, there appeared the first number of a new Government organ, *The Atheist*, specially designed to supplement the simple obscenities of the *Bezbojnik* or 'Godless,' by combating religion on 'strictly scientific grounds.' In October the trial was announced of an entire agricultural community, at Chernigov. The crimes of these agriculturists were that they read the Bible daily, and taught the Scriptures to their children; that they neglected to sing the *International*; and that they did not welcome the League of Communist Youth or *Komsomoltsi*. This ecclesiastical year of the Soviets was neatly rounded off by the arrest of fifty Bishops, in the month of December. In the following January, the New Year, 1926, opened with the arrest of the Metropolitan Peter, of the

Orthodox Church, together with 500 clergy. During the spring of this year the Government was able to report the closing down, since 1917, of 364 churches in Petrograd alone.

Reinforced anti-religious activity has marked the last two years of Soviet rule (1927-1928). The official 'Anti-God' League has been exceptionally active. The Government has ordered the closing of many Orthodox and Catholic churches and Jewish synagogues, the premises of which were to be converted into clubs. The acting Metropolitan of the Orthodox Church, Mgr. Sergius, was imprisoned in 1927 on refusing the Soviet Government's demand that he should excommunicate both clerical and lay members of the Orthodox Church living in exile; and subsequently 50 Orthodox dignitaries shared the fate of their Metropolitan. Then, in July 1927, came an extended attack. Orthodox prelates, to the number of 117, were thrown into prison; or were taken to concentration camps in the terrible Solvetsky Settlement, or other northern districts; or were exiled to Siberia, Turkestan, and the Caucasus. These prelates included 9 Metropolitans, 25 Archbishops, and 83 Bishops; they had no trial, neither were they accused of any crime. The agents of the *Ogpu* (*Cheka*) simply arrested them and conveyed them to their destination. The prelates confined in concentration camps are compelled to act as porters, road sweepers, night watchmen, and kitchen servants. They are forbidden to hold 'any kind of religious

service.' The year 1927 concluded with orders for an intensive anti-Christian campaign during Christmas; and by the announcement of the forthcoming trial of the Catholic Suffragan Bishop, Mgr. Skalski, charged, according to the official organ of the Soviet Government, *Izvestia*, with 'influencing the religious masses against godlessness, which is equivalent to influencing them against the Bolsheviks themselves, whose doctrine it is.'

It would be doing scant justice to the intelligence of the Soviet rulers of Russia to suggest that their openly proclaimed war upon 'the poison of religion' was waged chiefly by the massacre, exile, and imprisonment of Christians. Possibly some of the more educated members of the Soviet Ministry knew enough history to be aware of the fructifying power of the blood of the martyrs. To throw the bodies of the dead into sand-pits and rivers and wells, or to give them burial with the vilest of criminals was easy; but it soon became evident that a series of decrees, a network of organizations, would be required to eradicate religion from the minds and hearts of the living. The two methods of attack are lucidly demonstrated in the *ABC of Communism*, published by the Soviet Government in March 1919. 'The battle against religion,' say the authors of this book, one of whom, Bukharin, was a member of the Soviet Ministry, 'has two aspects, which it is very

necessary for all Communists to distinguish. In the first place there is the struggle against the Church, considered as a highly specialized organization for religious propaganda, interested materially in keeping the people in the bondage and darkness of religion. In the second place there is the struggle with religious prejudices deeply rooted and widely spread among the multitude of manual workers.¹ Massacre, executions, tortures, imprisonments, and confiscations were the weapons used in the first section of this battle front with 'the denizens of Heaven.' The weapons required for the second line of attack were more subtle. The Soviet Government lost no time in employing them. Hardly had the Commissars assumed power when compulsory lessons were instituted in all schools, beginning with the youngest children, called 'Atheism Courses.' Later, special officials travelled from school to school giving lectures in atheism. One of these lecturers, trying to prove that religious belief is only ignorance, asked triumphantly: 'Who can say that he has seen God?' After a second of silence a boy's voice replied: 'And have you seen that there is no God?' Next came the penalizing of all religious teaching for children, whether the teaching was given privately by parents, or in schools. This was effected by Clause 121 of the Criminal Code of the Soviet Government, promulgated in 1919. The

¹ E. Preobrajensky, *The ABC of Communism*. N. Bukharin, Government edition, 1919. Par. 89.

official explanation of this measure was that 'Religious instruction only leads to the obscuring of the child's mind.' Further, all books with any religious element were confiscated; the ecclesiastical libraries were pillaged; all ecclesiastical colleges were closed; and all printing of religious books was prohibited—it must not be forgotten that liberty of the printing press was promptly abolished in Soviet Russia. All teachers in Soviet schools and colleges were compelled to go through a full course of training in 'anti-religious' propaganda; and, conversely, teachers and professors were removed who declined to become instruments of Communist propaganda. It was declared that parents must learn that their children do not belong to them, but to 'the human race'; and that they must be prevented from implanting in the little ones 'the poison of religion.'¹ A decree promulgated by a body entitled the 'Supreme Church Soviet' at Moscow—Communists are radically deficient in a sense of humour—forbids the baptism of children. If a child is found to have visited a church he is expelled from school. A student of a Polytechnic in Southern Russia writes: 'Religion with us is held to be exploded stuff, and a thing positively bad.'

In November 1922 an Anti-Religious Seminary was opened at Moscow, under the direction of 'practised anti-Christian speakers,' and of

¹ E. Preobrajensky, *The ABC of Communism*. N. Bukharin, Government edition, 1919. Par. 79.

'science' masters, to which was attached an anti-religious library.¹ Conversely, University students at Moscow and at Petrograd, who tried to take a degree in Church History, were refused the standard monthly allowance of food and money. For some this meant semi-starvation.² The Vladivostok Communist Soviet distinguished itself by issuing an order for the confiscation of all books in which the words 'God' or 'Providence' occurred; and the Soviet police removed ten cartloads of books from the second-hand bookshops.

The provision for a rising generation, quite extricated from 'the morass of religion,'³ having thus been made, the problem of the adult still remained. This problem was attacked by street processions, by theatrical representations, by posters, by the cinema, by the Government press, and by lectures. An 'Atheist Theatre' was opened in Moscow, under Government auspices. The lecture 'Religion and Communism,' by S. R. Minin, was considered most effective, and was delivered repeatedly in Moscow, and in the provinces, to audiences of over 1,000 persons. A Soviet Government circular informed the people that 'religion is the brutalization of the people.'⁴ Two Government newspapers were, and are still,

¹ *Izvestia*, November 18, 1922.

² M. E. Almedingen, *Catholic Church in Russia*, p. 81.

³ 'First of all the people must be free from the morass of religion.' Zinovief, speech at Halle, October 14, 1920.

⁴ Circular of December 26, 1921.

circulated, one the *Atheist*, prepared for the more cultivated reader, the other the *Bezbojnik*, the obscenities of which its authors were surprised to find were not always appreciated.

It was in one of the first numbers of this official *Bezbojnik* that the Soviet Minister of Education, M. Lunacharsky, wrote: 'With all my heart I wish the *Bezbojnik* every success in its warfare against the revolting spectre of God, who throughout the whole of history has caused such diabolical evil to mankind.'

If an English Minister, of whatever political party, gave official and public utterance to phrases such as this, his colleagues would hastily convey him to the decent obscurity of a nursing home. To the colleagues of M. Lunacharsky his pious wish was entirely commendable and natural. It is in an incident such as this that the soul of the Soviet Government is unveiled.

Blasphemous articles and cartoons were also freely produced in the Government organs *Pravda* and *Izvestia*. Cartoons, issued in 1923, in *Izvestia* were 'often of too disgusting a character to be described.' The 'Soviet Laureate,' Damian Bodny, celebrated Easter week 1925 by publishing a series of verses caricaturing and ridiculing the birth of Christ, and the Church. The provincial papers were careful not to lag behind those published in Moscow. The Christmas number of the *Communist* of Harkov for 1923 had a series of 'scientific' atheist articles; and, also, a selection

of pornographic verses written in relation to the Nativity. These verses became popular, being sung by groups of young Communist men and women to the air of 'The Last Tango.' Certainly the English Labour Member, Mr. J. Sexton, was abundantly justified when he observed that 'Communists, to-day, follow a policy of moral assassination. There are some curs of the human species that would contaminate the toe of the boot that kicked them.'¹ Inspired by the Minister of Education, Lunacharsky, the Atheist Colleges prepared young men and women as 'missionaries of impiety.' Theatrical representations have been devised, throughout Russia, parodying the Gospels with a bestial obscenity impossible to describe in these pages.² The actors, by whom all the relations of human life are openly carried out before the audience, may be boys and girls. These 'spectacles' are enacted both in villages and in towns. They are considered particularly instructive for the soldiers of the Red Army. Thus, a performance was given at the Moscow Garrison Club, in the presence of Trotzky, and of five hundred soldiers, called 'The Trial of God.' At this performance figures representing the Divine Persons of the Trinity were placed in the dock. Posters are freely used; a well-known example is

¹ J. Sexton, M.P., Speech, August 28, 1921.

² The organizer of the blasphemous and obscene theatrical propaganda of the Soviet Government is E. V. Meyerhold. Meyerhold is a German, born in Russia. He is the Director of the now famous Revolutionary Theatre in Moscow.

that of the proletarian climbing up a ladder, with a hammer in his hand, to attack the figures of Christ, Mahomet, and Moses. The clergy are represented in these posters as evil livers, and as huge leering spiders.

Christmas apparently rouses Soviet officials to a gibbering paroxysm of anti-Christian hatred, combined with hatred for all the greater religions. In 1923 the official Communist League of Youth, and the Communist University Students' Organization, combined in a great Anti-Christian Demonstration. Instructions to local branches were given for anti-religious lantern-slide lectures. Effigies of Christ, Buddha, Abraham, Moses, and Osiris were paraded through the streets, and processions, orations, plays, satires, and debates were carried out. These activities were witnessed in every large city in Russia. Ribald parodies of the Christian Mass, and of Mahomedan ceremonies were enacted. A figure labelled 'Almighty God' was burnt; and effigies were carried in a procession chiefly made up of young men from the Universities, and boys and girls, ridiculing Christ, the Blessed Virgin, Buddha, Confucius, and Mahomet. Thousands of leaflets were thrown to the crowds with the famous saying of Marx, now inscribed on the entrance to the Kremlin, 'Religion is the opium of the people.' In many cities the effigies of Christ, Jehovah, Moses, and Mahomet were burnt, while the members of the League of Communist Youth danced and sang and kissed.

The headquarters of this League, in Moscow, considered the demonstrations to have been a great success; and a writer in the Government organ *Izvestia* declared that 'when all the world over the poisonous mists of various religions are dispelled, mankind . . . will gratefully remember that the first public challenge to God was made in Soviet Russia, January 7, 1923. Our Soviet young men have been the first to break the celestial front.'

During the following Christmas, that of 1924, the young Communists were restrained in their crude riot of obscenities, which were found to have disgusted rather than persuaded; and older agitators were put in charge. But Zinovieff was careful to point out that this alteration in the 'Christmas campaign against God' did not mean any slackening of effort. In a special appeal Zinovieff declared: 'We will grapple with the Lord God in due season. We shall vanquish him in his highest Heaven and wherever he seeks refuge, and we shall subdue him for ever. But we . . . must be cautious, much more cautious than hitherto.' Large quantities of 'anti-religious agitation' literature were despatched to the villages for distribution during this Christmas. The Young Pioneer Movement, the Communist League for implanting Communism and atheism in children, contributed an article to the Christmas number of *Izvestia* for this year, announcing that the children will believe in neither God nor devil, and will 'wage active war on our obsolete religious

parents,'—thus splitting the family in two. Ribald and obscene atheism is now being forced upon the children of Russia, by posters, by songs, by stories, by school lessons, by lectures and debates.

Month after month, for eleven years, the flood of obscenity and blasphemy has been poured over Russia, and has been directed down every channel by which the people could be reached. But the divine image in man has proved, during these years of conflict, to be stronger than the narrow-minded fanatics of the Kremlin had conceived to be possible. So, in the face of repeated defeats the Soviet Government inculcated redoubled energy, and more subtle forms of attack. 'We are as bent on destroying religion as ever,' wrote the Government organ *Izvestia*, 'but we must act very warily.' The fact was deplored that some Communists failed to observe Section XIII of the General Orders of the Communist Party, a section which obliges 'all members of the Party to carry on anti-religious propaganda.' This failure was officially stigmatized as 'the violation of the Party Programme in the sphere of religion.'¹ Priests were no longer publicly tried, or murdered in the open; they simply disappeared, often being banished to Siberia, without warm clothing, and in barely heated trains. One batch of these victims of wariness arrived at their destination literally frozen to death. A permanent Society of 'Anti-

¹ Report of the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 1924, p. 171, quoting *Izvestia*, March 31, 1921.

God Workers was formed for the purpose of bringing the whole movement under one cautious central authority,' as experience had shown that 'frontal attacks, however brilliantly organized, availed nothing against religion,' and have even 'produced reactionary results by stimulating dormant religious prejudices.'

'It is necessary to work slowly, word by word, drop by drop,' wrote the Soviet Government journal *Pravda*, 'to worm our way and to convince the stubborn that, by the unwritten decrees of the victorious proletariat, the inhabitants of Heaven and all their attributes have been abolished. With an iron broom the workers must clear their homes of the last vestige of all that is "holy."¹ By way of hastening this process in the homes of the workers, the Soviet Trade Union authorities, under the presidency of M. Tomski, who was not long ago fêted in England, issued a circular in August 1927, addressed to the provincial Trade Union centres, urging the local organizations to 'revive the compulsory anti-religious agitation, which must occupy an essential place in all trade-union educational work.'

Still the people of Russia failed to respond. As *Pravda* wrote regretfully: 'It is not easy to sweep that which is divine from the homes of the workmen.'² The town workers did indeed manifest, in valiant moments of defiance of the Red Terror, a very definite objection to the 'War on Heaven.'

¹ *Pravda*, May 1923.

² *Ibid.*, March 11, 1921.

When the wholesale sentences of death and of imprisonment were being passed on the priests of Petrograd, and the Bishop of Kronstadt was condemned to death, work in all factories and workshops was suspended, for one day, in Petrograd, Kronstadt, and other northern towns; and meetings were held, throughout the day, demanding a reprieve. Even the sailors of the Baltic Fleet, that stronghold of Communism, showed their discontent. This smouldering resistance of the Christian population of the towns, smothered by the army of spies organized by the *Ogpu* and the *Cheka*, and more openly beaten down by the soldiers of the Red Army, flamed out persistently and ultimately triumphed in the country. Both on the spiritual and the economic front, it is the Russian peasant, alone, who has baffled the fanatics of international Communism ruling in Moscow. The peasant was winning his decisive victories, in the villages of Russia, when the Allied Armies were being driven back on three fronts by the Red Armies of Trotzky, and when the private trader was being exterminated. He gained his economic victory by his immovable stand for the right, always affirmed by the Catholic Church, to hold private property. He gained the spiritual victory by a like immovable stand for the right to worship God as his conscience bade him. During eleven years of persecution the Russian people, in the villages and countryside, have held that 'celestial front' which their Communist masters

had boasted was broken for ever. The glorious record of Russian martyrdoms, during those years, closes in victory for the Christian faith. The dark and cruel forces of modern paganism have spent themselves in vain. 'As before,' observes an amazed Communist narrator writing in 1924, 'the church is the centre of the village life, where marriages, christenings, and burial services are regularly carried out.'¹ All the children get religious instruction, and the Soviet law, making it a criminal act to teach religion to a child, is a dead letter in the villages. The priests have sufficient maintenance and housing; while the village remains quite unconcerned as to the roofless schools, erected by the Soviet Administration, with their atheist teachers. 'We have nothing to do with them,' say the villagers; and they proceed to ensure excellent remuneration for the priest's wife, who teaches the children of the village.

Not only the peasants, but the workers also, are now asserting that right to freedom of religious action, formally assured to them by the Soviet Constitution, and immediately annulled in practice by the Soviet administrators.² 'The religious movement, in Russia, is becoming a sort of epidemic,' is the rueful comment of a member of the Præsidium of the Central Executive Committee of the Soviet Government, P. Smidovich.

¹ Yakovlev, *The Village as it is*. Moscow, 1924.

² *Principles of the Constitution of the Federal Socialist Republic of the Russian Soviet*, 1918, par. 13: 'Freedom of religious propaganda is ensured to every citizen.'

'It has already seized the small bourgeois elements, and is now (1923) devastating the workers and peasants. Since the autumn all the roads to monasteries, and all the old routes followed by pilgrims, are covered with long lines of people going to the holy places.' Mr. L. Lawton, writing in 1926, records as 'a sign of the time,' the 'rush of educated men to join the priesthood.'¹ In the following year the Soviet Press is forced to admit further evidence of the victorious power of the Cross. The *Krasnaia Gazeta* of March 22, 1927, records that a new church has been built with the aid of the workers at the large textile factory known as the 'Communist Vanguard' in the province of Vladimir which employs 7,000 men; and another church has been built at the 'Red October Factory' belonging to the Penza Cloth Trust, with 2,000 workers. In the province of Smolensk the 8,000 men of the Yartzoff Mills are following the lead of these two factories. At the 'Red Factory' a special body of collectors was formed, in different guilds, for the building fund; and on each pay-day all the small change of the workers was given. The new churches are erected alongside the old ones which the Soviet rulers had converted into clubs and cinemas. 'All which,' adds the *Krasnaia Gazeta*, 'is taking place not in out-of-the-way corners, but in the principal industrial centres, under our very eyes.' Similar evidence comes from the circular issued in

¹ L. Lawton, *The Russian Revolution*, 1927, p. 257.

August 1927 by the Central Council of the Soviet Trade Unions, deploring the active support being given by many trade unionists to the building of new churches and attendance at public worship.

The indomitable faith of the Russian people stirs their Soviet rulers to fresh efforts. Early in 1928 an order was issued by the Soviet Government the intention of which was, manifestly, the extermination of the Catholic priesthood in Russia. In April the Government press was declaring that 'Local authorities must, without loss of time, throw all the necessary forces on to the Anti-God front. . . . We must declare war to the death, a war upon all forms of religion.' This 'war' is to include 'Anti-God' plays, spectacles, and films. During Easter, 1928, the Soviet Ministry of Education organized 'special evenings of humour and satire' to draw the people away from the churches; and all the Soviet wireless stations were instructed to broadcast an anti-religious programme. The year closed with a decision to expel from the Soviet Trade Unions any member 'guilty' of taking part in a religious service; and with the opening of a new Anti-Religious University, at Moscow, in which the Soviet Minister of Health and the Minister of Education are lecturers, and which has already enrolled over 600 students.

CHAPTER IV

THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT AND EDUCATION

'The darkness of absolute ignorance begins to descend on the children of the Russian Revolution.'

Report by the Soviet Minister of Education,
Lunacharsky, 1923.

THERE is a profound difference in the attitude of the Soviet Commissars towards education, and that displayed by the same men towards religion. The action of Moscow in regard to all forms of religion is purely destructive. The Public Prosecutor of the Soviet Government declares: 'I spit on all religions.' The Soviet Minister of Education says: 'We hate the Christians.' The Soviet Ambassador to France witnessed with appreciative laughter a mock Mass, enacted by his principal private secretary, on Easter night. The Soviet Minister of War writes: 'Revolutionary morality dethrones God'; and he presides at publicly enacted blasphemies. The Soviet *Gazette* declares: 'Our task is to fight against Religion.' Religion is officially announced to be 'the opium of the people.' It is treated as a popular vice, to be stamped out by capital punishment, by torture and imprisonment, by ridicule, and by contempt.

The attitude of the Moscow Government, on the

other hand, towards education is furiously constructive. The present rulers of Russia are filled with a visionary enthusiasm for the introduction of the 'new learning' which they conceive to be fitted to the proletarian civilization. For this proletarian 'new learning' they have coined a new word—the *Proletcult*. The old education was, of course, to be swept away in the torrent of universal destruction demanded by the Communist programme. This was easily and rapidly effected in certain towns. The majority of the professors, teachers, and pupils escaped out of Russia,—six thousand Russian students found refuge in the Universities of Prague alone; and thousands are scattered throughout Europe, America, and the East. Others were either shot, dismissed, or expelled. The faculties of law, history, and literature have been abolished in almost every Russian University, being replaced by compulsory courses in the history of Materialism, the history of Socialism, and the history of the Communist Party. Admission to Universities is limited when possible to the members of 'The Communist League of Youth.' At the recent election of new members to the Leningrad Academy of Sciences vacancies were filled with men 'qualified' in Marxism and revolutionary tactics, instead of in the usual sciences.

In the summer of 1924 great numbers of students were expelled from the Universities, in all of which agents of the *Ogpu* or *Cheka* have carried on con-

stant espionage. In this summer every student was tested with regard to his Communist views and his 'proletarian origin.' The work was carried out by specially appointed Chekists. As a result, many students were expelled from the Universities, and their careers ruined. Many tried to get abroad; and many committed suicide. 'In the autumn of 1924 there was an epidemic of suicide among Russian students.' Several hundred students were arrested in Moscow, and taken to the fetid, crowded, and unspeakably filthy cells of the Lubyanka No. 2, and there confined, for some weeks. They were then forced to remain under the control of the *Cheka*; or else deported for three years to the living death of the Suzdal, or Solovetsky Concentration Camps, or to penal servitude for life in the Narym region of Siberia. 'Such was the tragic end of the famous Russian Students' Corps, which, during the years of the Revolution, and in Tsarist times, had always fought heroically, with youthful fiery idealism, for the cause of the liberation of the people.'¹ The same process was going on in 1925 when, for example, 30 per cent of the medical students at Kiev were expelled from the Medical Institute, as not being Communists.

In the curriculum of the schools, history and literature are taught as vehicles of Communist propaganda. School education (like everything else) is made compulsory; and a decree has been

¹ George Popoff, *The Cheka*, 1925, p. 259.

promulgated requiring working men and women to go to school for two hours daily. The villagers proved themselves to be more than a match for the autocrats of Moscow in the matter of spending two hours daily on the school bench; whereupon Moscow devised the scheme of special weeks 'for the abolition of illiteracy.' During such a 'week' a round-up of the older men and women of the village would be organized, much to the scandal of local opinion, and with very little reduction, it may be surmised, of illiteracy.

The statistics of the Soviet Ministry of Education have to be taken with reserve, as they include schools without either teachers or equipment; but, allowing for such terminological inexactitudes, the figures for the new era do not convey educational progress. In 1913 the number of elementary schools was 64,000, in 1923 49,000; the number of pupils in secondary schools in 1913 was 300,500, in 1923 it was 240,000; the number of students during the same period, in the technical schools, had fallen from 170,000 to 53,000. The salary of teachers in towns in 1924 was a third of the very poor salary paid under the Tsarist regime, with an enormously increased cost of living; and even this pittance was not paid regularly. The rate of pay provided by the Soviet Government for their school teachers, coupled with the *morale* of Communism, may account for the conditions of the Soviet teaching profession officially reported by the Minister of Education,

in 1925 : ' Our male and female teachers prostitute themselves, or commit suicide. The rest run away, and it is impossible to replace them.'¹ In March 1927 the official rate of pay for Soviet teachers was 40 roubles, £4 is. *per month*.²

As regards equipment, all books, periodicals, and papers were of course nationalized when the Soviet Commissars assumed power. The results for education were not happy. A woman teacher of a village school writes : ' In 1919 each pupil received only one pencil and two nibs. During three years we never received any textbooks. We could only teach geography through old periodicals and magazines which we found at hand.'³

In the year when the Soviet Government was applying pure Communism to Russia, a visitor to Moscow was shown the specimen Government school, at the Hotel de l'Europe, and found everything on a luxurious scale. She was delighted. The next day a friend called while supper was preparing. ' Don't throw away those potato peelings ! ' cried the caller, who was matron of a girls' school. ' Why ? ' said the visitor. ' The children are so glad of them,' said the matron. ' Children ! ' said the visitor, ' they have everything,—" first " rations.' ' Come to my school,' said the matron. They went, *not* accompanied by an official guide. There were 65 children in the

¹ Lunacharsky in *Izvestia*, October 26, 1925.

² *Trood*, March 16-20, 1927.

³ Makeev, *Russia*, pp. 292-3.

school, most of them without shoes, and constantly hungry ; and they were sharing 20 wooden spoons amongst them. The Minister of Education reported, in 1923, that the schools had broken windows ; that they needed blackboards, maps, copy books, and paper ; and that the refectories were so dirty that the children contracted diseases. The Report for 1924 states that the children were still being taught in dilapidated buildings, which were rarely heated (in the Russian winter the thermometer falls to 20 degrees below zero) ; one lead pencil would be shared by ten children ; there were very few books ; and the report revealed that ' the number of schools and pupils is diminishing every day.' This it will be noted is after seven years of Soviet rule. In the Report for 1925 it was again declared by the Minister of Education, Lunacharsky,¹ that the schools were in a deplorable condition, roofless and unheated ; and that great quantities of books printed by the Government remained in the warehouses because the teachers were unwilling to use them—history and literature converted into Communist propaganda might well prove a stumbling block to the unfortunate pedagogues. In this year, after eight years of unfettered Communist Government, Lunacharsky reported that in many parts of Russia less than 20 per cent of the children, of school age, attended school ; and that, throughout

¹ It is interesting to note that the Soviet Minister of Education, Lunacharsky, was formerly a member of the Secret Police of the Tsarist regime, in the espionage section of Nijni-Novgorod.

the Soviet territories, there were fewer than 50 per cent of the children at school. In August 1926, the Minister of Education admitted that 'there is no hope in the near future of any advance in the education of the people.' Since 1921 there had been a decline of 2,000,000 pupils attending elementary schools. The number in 1926 was less than under the Tsarist regime.¹ At the close of 1928 a Congress was convened at Moscow to discover why Soviet education had 'gone backward rather than forward.' In the principal republic of the Soviet Union, the R.S.F.S.R., the illiterates had increased in four years by 4,000,000, and there are 28,000,000 in this area alone who can neither read nor write. A few weeks previously Krupskaya, Lenin's widow, declared that 'utter disorder prevails in the whole school system.'² Evidently the advance of the 'new learning' has halted on the road.³

It is well, however, for the children of Russia that they should escape attendance at the Soviet schools. For the terrible physical suffering of the children, and the depths of their mental ignorance, sink into insignificance in comparison with the moral degradation inflicted by the *Proletcult*. The

¹ L. Lawton, *The Russian Revolution*, 1926, p. 403.

² At a Plenary Conference of the Young Communists' League, October 1928.

³ The Soviet Government organ, *Izvestia*, wrote in November 1928: 'All standards on the educational front remain considerably behind pre-revolutionary standards.'

Soviet schools are always mixed; the boys and girls have complete freedom; and they sleep in the same dormitory. A leading member of the Soviet Administration, and Ambassador successively to Norway and to Mexico, Alexandra Kollontai, who was welcomed by the English Press on a recent visit to England, wrote in 1922: 'Immorality in the schools is making satisfactory progress; many young girls of fifteen are already pregnant. We may rejoice, for we shall have some new little Communists.' In 1924 a Report was read by M. Yaroslavsky, before the Central Executive Committee of Soviets, in session at Moscow, stating that the custom was spreading of 'practising abortion among quite young children.' In one area there was a Maternity Hospital adjacent to some of the Soviet schools. In eighteen months more than one hundred girls, from these schools, were admitted to this Hospital.¹ One of the masters in a Moscow Academy describes the new *Proletcult* education quite frankly: 'The boys and girls are herded together indiscriminately, and there is no semblance of morality. There is no pretence at discipline. Pupils do exactly as they please, even walking in and out in the middle of a lesson. No punishments are inflicted, no homework is set, and no marks are allowed. Each class has its own committee; these committees control the masters.' The Head Mistress of one boarding school was a professional prostitute, a fact known

¹ C. Sarolea, *Impressions of Soviet Russia*, p. 98.

to the Soviet authorities; and in 1925 the Soviet Prime Minister, M. Rykoff, speaking at a Teachers' Conference at Moscow, observed that licentiousness and corruption raged not only among the lower, but also among the higher Soviet institutions.

These nauseous facts are the outcome of a carefully devised section of the tactics of International Communism. The International Communist is perfectly aware that one of the most intractable of the obstacles to that world domination of Communism, for which every sincere Communist is working, is the general recognition, by the peoples of the world, of certain primary moral obligations. Hence the indefatigable and organized replacement, in Communist education, of morality by lust, and the insistence on the educational formula of the *Proletcult*, as regards morality, which is expressed in the phrase *everything is allowed*.¹ The application of this formula during eleven years to the Communistic youth of the Russian towns has naturally resulted in wholesale debauchery; a debauchery, moreover, which is welcomed. A member of the *Komsomol*, the 'League of Communist Youth,' writes: 'it was necessary not merely to fight against bourgeois morality, but to trample it under foot.'² This systematic Soviet trampling of morality 'under foot' has been carried out among the lads and girls (and indeed among the adults also, by means of obscene posters and representations) with a

¹ Madame Smidovich, *Pravda*, March 24, 1925. ² *Pravda*, May 7, 1925.

thoroughness the facts of which cannot be transcribed into English print. It is a formula adopted with consideration by the Soviet Government. Communism, we are told, 'deliberately banishes all moral law.' As a prominent colleague of Stalin, and one who has survived the expulsions of Trotzky, Zinovieff, and other Opposition leaders, M. Yaroslavsky has said: 'all that is favourable to the Party and the class, as a whole is moral; everything that is not, is immoral.'¹ On this point M. Yaroslavsky joins hands with his opponent Trotzky, for Trotzky has acclaimed the fact that 'Revolutionary morality dethrones all absolute standards.'² A world educated to recognize no absolute standards is the ideal world of the Communist *Proletcult*. It is an ideal which overcrowds the Soviet maternity hospitals with child patients; and leads the administrative authorities to issue decrees such as No. 259 of the Soviet Commissariat of Health and Justice: 'any woman desiring to interrupt pregnancy by artificial means may have this operation performed, free of charge, in any of the Soviet Hospitals where the maximum harmlessness of such an operation can be guaranteed.'³ It is an ideal the immediate results of which have already disturbed the practical mind of Yaroslavsky. In the Report already quoted on 'Party (i.e. Communist Party)

¹ *Ibid.*, October 9, 1924. M. Yaroslavsky, in common with many of his colleagues, rules in Russia under an alias. His real name is Gubelmann. ² Trotzky, *Between Red and White*, p. 52.

³ *Izvestia*, November 18, 1920.

Ethics,' which was presented to the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets in Moscow, in 1924, Yaroslavsky says, speaking of the increase in Communist Russia of the practice of abortion, even among quite young children, 'no strong, healthy men and women can develop from a generation which is ruining itself, from childhood, by sexual intercourse and frequent abortions.'¹ It is an ideal so fervently practised by Communist youth that the well-known Communist, Madame Smidovich, has considered the matter to be of sufficient interest to justify an article written in March 1925, in *Pravda*. 'Communist youth,' writes Madame Smidovich, 'evidently believes that the most primitive approach to questions of sexual passion is really a Communistic one. Everything which does not fall into a way of life which might be good enough for Hottentots, or even still more primitive races, is qualified as being bourgeois.'² Any Communist girl who will not accept the advances of a Communist lad is in danger of being denounced as a bourgeoisie. Mr. H. G. Wells, writing five years earlier, found that 'every moral standard is a subject for debate in the mixed schools'; and he attributes much of what he frankly describes as 'the appalling moral condition of the youth of both sexes' to the educational methods of the *Proletcult*. During eleven years of power the educational policy of the Soviet Government has remained frankly anti-moral.

¹ *Pravda*, October 9, 1924.

² *Ibid.*, March 24, 1925.

Another interesting ideal of the 'new learning' was enunciated at a Congress of Ukrainian Teachers, by M. Shumski, Commissar for Education in the great area of the Ukraine. M. Shumski declared that 'politics must be the corner-stone in the upbringing of children.' Recently a more intensive attack on religion, for the Soviet schools. Krupskaya declared, in December 1928, that the Soviet schools must be more actively anti-religious, that they must 'combat the home influence of religious parents.'

A further result on the children of Russia of the inculcation of the Communist formulas, 'everything is allowed' and 'everything belongs to everybody,' soon became evident in the terrible statistics of criminality among minors with which the Soviet Government is faced. Thieving among children has reached incredible proportions; the proceeds of the robberies being often 'invested,' by the child thieves, in vodka or in cocaine, or else gambled away. *Pravda* described, in 1923, the 12 or 13 years old boys who 'murder and rob, and bring their loot to their mistresses, who also are only 12 or 13 years old.' Agents of the Moscow Soviet, investigating these conditions in 1923, found girl prostitutes of 10 and 15 years old, who practically lived on vodka and cocaine. That this was no incidental fact is shown by the figures of child criminality four years previously. Thus, in 1919, Petrograd, with a population of 600,000, registered 10,000 cases of 'infantile

crime.' In 1920, children formed 6 per cent of the street criminals registered in Russia. Two years later, in 1922, the proportion had risen to the terrible figure of 10 per cent.¹ During only six months, in 1923, children in the Ukraine under 13 years of age had committed 29,317 crimes.

In the year following, 1924, the Soviet Government issued a decree requiring that steps be taken to combat the growth of crime among the young. Since this date 245 Commissions have been appointed to deal with the problem of these results of the 'new education.' In Odessa and Nikolaviev 115,000 children were registered who gained their living by begging, thieving, murder, and plunder. In 1925 Lunacharsky, Minister of Education, declared that the criminal children of Russia had become 'dangerous enemies of society.' In 1926 an official pronouncement deplored the increasing number of acts of violence committed by children.

In placing on record the extent of juvenile crime, under the Soviet Administration of Russia, the element of the countless thousands of waif children, so characteristic of the Russia of to-day, must not be overlooked. This 'dark sea of child misery and suffering, driving children into vice, crime, and hatred of society,' to use M. Lunacharsky's description,² has been ascribed by the apologists

¹ Statistics given by the Information Bureau of the 'Workmen's and Peasants' Inspection.'

² Appeal by M. Lunacharsky, May 1925.

for the Soviet rulers to the blockade of the Allies of 1918-20, and to the famine of 1921-22. The logic of these apologists is confuted by the facts acknowledged by the Soviet authorities themselves. In 1925 Lunacharsky described the vagrant children as a great stream, threatening 'to develop into a polluting flood poisoning the entire current of life.' In the same year the widow of Lenin, Krupskaya, courageously protested against the habit of the Soviet authorities of sending vagrant children of Moscow and other towns away to remote districts, 'where they perish far from the sight of Moscow's citizens, whose eyes their presence in the streets of Moscow offended.'¹ It may be added that the presence of these children would open the eyes of visitors and delegations to Moscow. The waif children of Moscow alone, towards the close of this year, 1925, were estimated at 25,000; and in this year the Soviet authorities officially notified 'the great increase' of the general 'Soviet army of vagrant children.' The waif children of Moscow had increased to 30,000 in the following year, 1926. Many of the children were drug addicts. In May 1926 the number of Soviet waif children was double that recorded in the previous year; and these children were reported to be children of both peasants and factory workers. The Soviet Commissar of Health reported, in October 1928, that

¹ Madame Krupskaya was also insistent in disclosing, during 1925, the 'revolting conditions of the Soviet "Homes for Children."'

during the two previous months, in Moscow, 5,968 homeless waifs had been interned in the concentration camps. Most of them were infected with disease. The majority were from families of peasants who had been shot by the Government. These records given by the Soviet Administration cannot be explained away by events occurring in 1918-22.

The basic doctrines of the *Proletcult* education are not such as to appeal to the majority of Russian parents; and it soon became obvious to the Communist visionaries that their 'new learning' could only be taught if the child was segregated from the religious and moral influences of its father and mother. Therefore in the schools of Communist Russia we have, to quote Mr. H. G. Wells, 'the break-up of the family in full progress.'¹ M. Makeev points out, in his meticulously impartial review of Soviet Russia, that 'in the new morality the conception of the family should be completely excluded.'² It follows that the new educational system must also provide Homes for the 'segregated' children, preparatory to their reaching school age. The town children—the village, as we shall see, steadfastly rejects the *Proletcult*—have therefore been institutionalized, to adopt Mr. Wells's expressive phrase. The economic conditions, induced by the pressure of strictly applied Communist ideals in economics,

¹ H. G. Wells, *Russia in the Shadows*, p. 107.

² Makeev and O'Hara, *Russia*, p. 287.

facilitated this scheme of child segregation, as many parents were no longer able to maintain their children; 'entire towns,' writes Mr. Wells, 'were sinking down towards slum conditions and the Bolshevik Government has had to play the part of a gigantic Dr. Barnardo.' The Barnardo Homes might well claim damages for libel from Mr. Wells.

The educational institutions in which the children have been placed are comparable in horror to those foulest of all the inventions of the visionaries of the Soviet Government, the prisons of the *Cheka*. In the 'Homes' for newborn children only one per cent survived. An official investigation into the 'children's colonies' of the Kherson Government found that infant immorality, formerly an exception, had 'become a normal occurrence,' both in the Children's Homes and in the schools; out of 5,000 girls between the ages of 9 and 13, who were examined, 77 per cent were ruined. When a 'First Experimental Commune for Children' was set up, in a farm near Moscow, the villagers had to supply the children, who were starving, with food. The principals of the Commune were re-selling the children's food, at a large profit. Among the children of this Commune venereal disease was rife. *Izvestia*, in an article published in October 1922, says that the moral atmosphere of the official Homes for Children 'is of the most incredible nature, and the children in them are reduced to a state of absolute moral and physical exhaustion. Owing to an

absence of proper and complete isolation of the morally corrupted children the rest are subjected to a gradual process of contamination.' In another Soviet State Home six or eight children were allotted to one bed ; they ate out of old jam-jars ; their little bodies were covered with vermin ; they screamed with terror and pain. The *Save the Children Fund* might well turn its attention to the souls and bodies of the children in the State Homes and Schools of Soviet Russia.

It is not surprising that the parents had to be compelled to yield up their children to the Communist 'Homes.' A report, published in *Izvestia*, in September 1919, describes how children from the age of three were being forcibly taken from their parents and placed in State institutions, to be educated in the *Proletcult*. 'To protect children from the pernicious influence of parents with bourgeois sympathies, visits are forbidden.' At this date, 7,000 children under the age of ten had been removed to State Homes ; many died owing to lack of food and care. Parents who objected were arrested. Well might the English Communist, Mr. Bertrand Russell, write, after his visit to Russia in 1920, 'the whole temper of the authorities seemed to be directed to breaking the link between the mother and child.'¹ Mr. Russell's personal observation is supported to the letter by the statement of the specialist in Soviet education, Madame Leliana : 'we must remove

¹ B. Russell, *The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism*, p. 67.

the children from the baneful influence of the family ; to put it plainly, we must nationalize them. From the earliest days of their life they must be reared in the beneficial atmosphere of the Communist Kindergarten and school. The task before us is to force the mothers to give up their children to the Soviet State.' Occasionally the Russian mother faced the horrors of the *Cheka*, and protested vigorously. In April 1921 the Soviet paper *Rabotchaya Rania* announced that all the wives of the Soviet officials of the town of Tver had gone on strike, repudiating all marital and domestic duties, 'as a protest against the deaths of eighty "nationalized children" in an educational institution.' The Soviet Government was, however, prompt in suppressing the gallant women of Tver. The method chosen was characteristic. The local Red Army Commandant stationed soldiers in the houses of the officials, to compel their wives to return to their duties.

From the point of view of technical education the Soviet Children's Homes proved to be equally lacking. M. Rykoff, the Soviet Prime Minister, stated in 1924 that 'the children's Homes create tramps, who do not know what work is.'¹

After creating, during their autocratic rule of eleven years, what is probably the greatest aggregate of child misery and debauchery that the world has ever witnessed, the executive of the Soviet Government has now come to the

¹ *Pravda*, August 23, 1924.

conclusion that a return to the laws of human nature must be permitted. Accordingly a retreat from the application of the *Proletcult*, the ideal of Communist education, has been sounded in regard to the children ; and a return to the family system has been carried out. State 'maintenance' of children is relinquished. It is admitted that the system adopted in the 'Homes' has been a complete failure, and that it has continually increased the ranks of child criminals. To cleanse the towns from this scandal it has been decided to abandon the direct State maintenance of such children. Foster-parents were to be found among the peasantry for the child inmates of the Soviet 'Homes.' Also the waif children were to be rounded up ; it was estimated that 25,000 would be collected in Moscow alone. To induce the peasants to adopt the children, gifts of additional land, where such was available, or a sum of money, were offered to those who would take children. No one family may adopt more than two children.

It is to the peasant that the Soviet Government is at last compelled to turn, when confronted with the universal crime, debauchery, disease and death, engendered by their educational ideals of the *Proletcult*. The peasant, God-fearing and shrewd, refused from the first to submit his children to the experiments of the 'new learning.' He has left the Government schoolhouses to fall into decay, saying : ' Why should we thatch them ? We have

nothing to do with them.' The peasants have very literally no use for these schools. But they are quite alive to the need for education ; and they will supply good remuneration to the wife of the priest who teaches their children. The village also institutes a severe boycott of the Communist teacher. ' These teachers,' says the Government official P. Smidovich, ' sent out to the villages, after going through special anti-religious propaganda and similar courses, were frequently boycotted.' Things were made so unpleasant for them that, in many cases, after holding the Communist post for a few weeks, they found there was nothing left for them to do but to return to the town. ' The village,' laments P. Smidovich, ' is ruled by its own customary laws, to overthrow which is beyond the strength of the authority of instructors, and of zealous workers in the Communist cause.' The peasants of Russia have saved the children of the Russian villages.

A Ministry of Education which decrees that all adults shall go to school for two hours daily is not likely to neglect a close supervision over the libraries used by the people. It was reported, in 1921, that ' the circulation of books is as carefully controlled as the circulation of dangerous drugs.' In the autumn of 1925, existing measures were tightened up by a decree, issued to the provincial and district authorities, giving instructions as to the inspection of public libraries, and the ' removal of counter-revolutionary, and inartistic, literature.'

It was stated that previous instructions had not been carried out satisfactorily; and the new decree enacted that more stringent measures be enforced. The instructions referred especially to small libraries in workers' clubs and in towns and villages, and to travelling libraries. Among the books to be removed were:—

- (1) In the section of philosophy, psychology, and ethics, 'all books written in the spirit of idealistic philosophy.'
- (2) In the section of religion, all books on religion, except those of an anti-religious character.
- (3) In the section on politics and sociology, all books published by patriotic organizations.
- (4) All propagandist literature of the year 1917, advocating a democratic republic, civic freedom, and universal suffrage.
- (5) Reference books on law.
- (6) Scientific books that speak 'of the wisdom of the Creator.'

An example of the application of this decree is published in *Pravda*, November 1925. The library of the Military School, *Vystral*, it was announced, had been sold for pulp to a paper-mill. This library included 100,000 volumes, which had been collected for over a century, and formerly belonged to the Moscow Military College. It contained valuable eighteenth- and nineteenth-century books, as well as many complete editions

of Russian and foreign classics. Three years ago, in January 1926, the Soviets were still waging war upon the Immortals. In that month the Soviet authorities sent urgent instructions to 120 libraries in Leningrad to destroy all volumes of belles-lettres, dating before 1917, which were out of harmony with Communist doctrines. It was ordered that the work of destruction be completed by the middle of February; and careless or evading librarians would be prosecuted. *Prius dementat.*

The Government of Moscow has been compared to that of the Mahomedan conquerors. It was a great Caliph who ordered that all the books in the world-famous library of Alexandria should be burnt, since 'if these books approve the Koran they are unnecessary and ought to be destroyed, and if they oppose the Koran they ought also to be destroyed.' In the same spirit the Soviet Government orders the destruction of all books not in harmony with the materialism of the prophet of Communism, Karl Marx. It needs the pen of Swift to do justice to the spectacle of the angry zealots, enthroned in the Kremlin, decreeing the extinction of the world's greatest theologians, philosophers, lawyers, historians, artists, musicians, in order that nothing may hinder the spread of their newly devised *Proletcult*.

The apostles of the *Proletcult*, while aiming chiefly at influencing the rising generation, did not forget the need of recasting and controlling the

creative forces in science, art, and literature. The new rulers contemned all that the leaders of Russian thought, who were no mean contributors 'to the treasury of European culture,' had valued most highly. The result is well summed up by Makeev: 'Their ideals, their literature, their art were now denounced as the vile satisfactions of a selfish taste, as bourgeois vices. Theirs was a terrible dilemma: to prostitute their talent and deny their gods, or to remain silent forever unless there was another escape. It is to the lasting credit of the Russian *intelligentsia* that, when the choice had to be made, so very few renegades were to be found in its midst. Those who were able to escape the living death at home, and settle abroad, could now endure penury and starvation with all the greater fortitude in that they could at least think, act, and produce freely. In this way Russia lost such vital forces as the authors Bunin, Merezhkovski, Kuprin, Remizov, Artzibashev; musical composers such as Rachmaninoff, Stravinsky, Prokofiev; and artists such as Somor, Bakst, Goucharova; and many scientists. The Russian savant is doing good work in the learned institutions and universities abroad, and Russian literature has not died out in exile.'¹ It is to the still greater honour of these writers, artists, and scientists, who refused to prostitute their gifts to the *Proletcult*, that they denied themselves the benefit of the regulation which, under the Communist

¹ Makeev, *Russia*, 1925, p. 298.

regime, allows special clothing and food rations to artists and others who are willing to do its bidding.¹

While the art, literature, and science of Russia under the Soviet Government were thus taking headlong flight to countries in which intellectual freedom still existed, the section of the *Proletcult* devoted to these creative activities was being inaugurated in 'the forceful manner which had been so successful in the political field.' Lunacharsky was appointed Commissar for the Departments of science, art, music, literature, etc. A convinced Communist was placed at the head of each Department. No poetry or literature that is not 'orthodox,' viz. of unalloyed Communist doctrine, was allowed to reach the printing-press. Unorthodox classics were recast. Thus, much satisfaction was expressed in Moscow in 1925 by the official issue of a book by M. F. Shipulinsky, aimed at proving that Shakespeare's plays were written, not by 'the capitalist and exploiter, the illiterate Shakespeare, . . . but by a conspirator and revolutionary, Roger Manners, Earl of Rutland.'

Futurism became the officially recognized art of the State and was given every support and encouragement, for three years. Futurists seized every opportunity to shock the bourgeois, trampling on every tradition of art in the past. The streets were filled with Futurist posters, and were decorated by Futurist statues. The State

¹ B. Russell, *The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism*, p. 45.

publications and literature were full of *vers libre*. But at last the proletariat itself began to revolt ; and Lunacharsky felt compelled to withdraw his experiment. 'Subsidies were withdrawn and Futurism melted into thin air.' The relaxation of the economic policy in 1921, by which some private trading was allowed, brought back a certain measure of initiative in publication ; but the censorship was still so severe that Russian writers found that they were paying dearly for their decision to remain under Soviet jurisdiction. They were learning that 'the constant tutorship of the State is killing the soul and spirit of the literary man.' They found, as Sobol protested, that 'from every writer the authorities expect a symbol of faith. You must proclaim your faith in the proletariat of all countries, or else you will be brought before the censor.' The novelist Kasatkin has a striking account of the efforts of the authors of the *Prolet-cult* in the domain of creative work. 'The October Revolution (1917) wholly banished the famous dead, all the fathers and grandfathers of Russian literature, in order to keep the proletarian culture pure. But even the victorious storm of Revolution could not destroy the law of literary succession, the development of one from the other . . . the mirage was put before us, it is still being done, of the possibility of creating one single, whole, indivisible, and constant proletarian culture. . . . In consequence, on literary "fronts," even the most "left," we see, walking about, naked

kings, with an incredible conceit, affirming that they are wearing the finest raiment.'¹

The artificial proletarian culture of the Soviet Government, the *Proletcult*, divorced from religion and from all moral standards, has proved to be a sterile and unclean failure. The visionaries in charge of the Soviet Ministry of Education have admitted their failure, at the cost of the lives of hundreds of thousands of children, starved, diseased, debauched ; and perforce are returning the child survivors of their State Homes and State schools to the wise and tender care of the peasant. These visionaries of Moscow have also learnt that the great creative arts of literature and music can be killed, but cannot be coerced. To-day Russian literature and music, refusing to be killed, are turning to the classic founts, the sources of inspiration that the Soviet rulers of Russia imagined, in their blind self-conceit, that they had destroyed for ever. The soul of Russia still lives, in her villages, and in the streets of her towns. Her creative genius still lives, in exile or in silence, awaiting the recovery of that spiritual, intellectual, and personal freedom which every month brings nearer to her people.

¹ Makeev and O' Hara, *Russia*, p. 302.

CHAPTER V

THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT AND LIBERTY

'The Dictatorship of the Proletariat is unthinkable without violence and terror.'

Lenin, Speech at Moscow, July 30, 1920.

THE frankly reactionary policy of the Soviet Government in reviving the religious persecutions discarded by all progressive nations two hundred years ago, and in making education subservient to a fanatical political creed, are two salient characteristics which must be given first place in a record of the Soviet State. Under the Soviet rulers of Russia no town-dweller can call his soul his own; neither can he educate his own children as he himself would desire. If the Soviet Government had its way, moreover, spiritual and intellectual freedom would be extinguished in all countries. 'We must know how to hate,' writes Lunacharsky, the Soviet Minister of Education, 'for only at this price *can we conquer the universe* . . . the anti-religious campaign must not be restricted to Russia: it should be carried on throughout the world.' And this is not merely an individual expression of opinion. At a Government Congress, held in May 1925,¹ one of the principal aims of the Soviet Ministers was frankly stated to be 'to fertilize proletarian movements in

¹ The Third Soviet Congress of the U.S.S.R., May 20, 1925.

other countries,'—in other words to extend to world-wide dimensions that Dictatorship of the Proletariat under which Russia has lost both freedom of conscience and freedom of mental development. The 'War on Heaven' and the educational system of the *Proletcult* are searchlights on the nature of that unique international power which is now administering an area occupying one-sixth of the surface of the globe. For freedom of conscience, or freedom of thought, this power, evidently, has no use. There remains the last of the triple indefeasible rights of man, as a human being, the right to freedom of the person. How has this newly developed force in the history of Europe dealt with the elemental human right to personal freedom?

To give the correct answer to this question, it is obvious that the first few months of the violent acquisition of 'all power' must not be taken as typical of the new regime. As Lenin himself said, there were moments when even that great architect of revolution was by no means firmly seated in the saddle; was, in fact, precariously hanging on to the mane. Neither man nor movement is to be judged when in that position.

But, by the autumn of 1920 the prolonged civil war, the blockade of the Allies, and also the war with Poland, were over. At this time, the state of the country is described, by so impartial a historian as Mr. Michael Farbman, as being entirely peaceful: 'Soviet Russia was again at

peace.¹ We will observe, therefore, the conditions of personal freedom obtaining in the peaceful Soviet Russia of 1921 and the succeeding years. Before considering detailed accounts, it will be useful to note the broad view of the personal 'freedom' of the Russian worker, in 1921, given by Mr. Urquhart, the Chairman of the Russo-Asiatic Consolidated Company. Mr. Urquhart had to decide on the signing of a contract with the Soviet Government for the resumption of work on the Company's large mineral properties in Russia. Here is no question of political prejudice; the point is one of mercantile prudence. Mr. Urquhart concluded that no conceivable contract would be immune from the action, upon the workers, of the 'Extraordinary Commission' administered by the Soviet Minister Felix Dzerjinsky, commonly known as the *Cheka*. The *Cheka* he described briefly, in 1921, as being accuser, judge, and jury; as having absolute power of life and death; and as keeping the Russian people in a complete subjugation of terror: 'Every phase of the individual activity of the employer, his staff, and his workmen, even in the privacy of their homes, would be under the shadow and the menace of this terrorist organization.' The absolute control exercised by the *Cheka* over the Trade Unions, and even over officials of the Government, would render any contract inoperative.

¹ Michael Farbman, *After Lenin*, p. 45.

Certainly, the acts of the Soviet Administration during the year 1921 were not calculated to reassure employers who might then be considering the resumption of working contracts. In January of this year, the Soviet Government issued a decree warning all workmen on strike that unless they returned to work immediately they would be imprisoned for terms varying from one to five years; and that their families would be deprived of food cards—in other words would be starved. Here we see two principles of the Soviet Government actually at work: the principle of the use of hostages; and the principle enunciated by Lenin that the 'basis of all' is the 'struggle for bread,' i.e. that the ultimate instrument of power held by the Soviet State is 'the bread monopoly.'¹ The use of hostages, and the use of compulsory starvation, as instruments of coercion directed against the workers, sounds oddly in a country supposed to be governed by a 'Workers' Republic,' and to be enjoying 'entire peace.' Still less in harmony with a peaceful regime are the official statistics published in Moscow showing that during the first ten days of this same month of January 1921, 347 persons were executed, that is rather over 30 per day; and this list follows, moreover, on the previous tally of 118 executions during the latter part of December 1920. A few weeks later, in February, the *Chekas* of Volhynia and Podolia carried out 'mass executions'; and,

¹ N. Lenin, *Will the Bolsheviks maintain Power?*, pp. 57-8, 85.

in March, 62 workmen were shot. In April the s.s. *Reshed Pasha* arrived at Novorossisk from Constantinople, with 2,500 passengers on board; of these 750 were shot. In May, railwaymen on strike on the Ekaterinoslav railway were sentenced to five and six years' imprisonment with hard labour, these sentences being commuted death sentences, inflicted for the crime of striking.

In June came news of the imprisonment of members of Co-operative Societies; together with the statement by Madame Stencil Lenskaya, representing the Russian Co-operators, at the International Co-operative Meeting at Copenhagen, that the Soviet Government had completely 'eliminated' the Co-operative Movement in Russia. By what stretch of imagination would it be possible to conceive of an English Government, of whatever political complexion, 'eliminating' the English Co-operators? But these things happen, to an accompaniment of summary arrests and midnight shootings, in 'Soviet' Russia. In this same month of June the *Cheka* of Moscow shot 748 persons; the *Cheka* of Petrograd shot 216; that of Harkov, 418; that of Ekaterinodar, 315. Thus four *Chekas* shot 1,697 persons, in thirty days, during a period of 'entire peace.'¹

The hand of the *Chekas* dealt out compulsory confiscations of personal property, under the colloquialism of 'squeezing the bourgeoisie,' as well as 'mass executions.' It was Lenin who had

¹ S. P. Melgounov, *The Red Terror*, p. 92.

said, at the first Congress of Soviets in July 1917, 'We must grab the bourgeoisie more firmly, so that they burst at all their seams.' In 1921 the authorities of Ekaterinodar celebrated the anniversary of the Paris Commune by 'grabbing' the bourgeoisie with exemplary firmness. The usual procedure was that special days would be set apart for wholesale domiciliary visits. These visits stripped the inhabitants of the bulk of their clothing, linen, and other articles, and left them, by way of clothing rations, merely a shirt apiece, a couple of handkerchiefs, and so forth. When this anniversary of the Commune was celebrated at Ekaterinodar in 1921, all houses inhabited by gentry (before the Revolution), and by doctors, or professors, or engineers, were entered at nightfall by Red Guards and Soviet officials, fully armed. The whole house was searched; all money and valuables were removed; and then the occupants were ordered outside, in their indoor clothing, without regard to age or youth or sickness (typhus patients were haled out), and loaded on to wagons. Half were taken to a concentration camp; half were sent to Petrovsk for forced labour in the Caspian fisheries. This deportation of families, and confiscation of their property, went on for a day and a half.¹

In the autumn of this year the electoral freedom of the Soviet State received a striking illustration. Elections were being held of delegates to the

¹ *Revolutsionnaya Rossia*, Nos. 12, 13, 43.

Petrograd Soviet, of which Zinovieff was President. Just before the date of the election the Petrograd *Cheka* arrested all the Social Democrats whose addresses were known.¹ Thus does the Soviet system simplify electoral contingencies.

At the close of the year the workers in the Crimea were taught that it was not permitted under a Soviet administration to buy bread, however hungry one might be, unless sold by the Government. On December 22 a steamer put in to Sebastopol with 500 tons of flour. The Sebastopol Department of the Commissariat for Foreign Trade could not afford to buy it. The dockers asked permission from the Soviet officials to buy the flour, and were given a blank refusal. Some thousands of workers then gathered before the Commissariat Office with placards: 'We demand bread, peace, and freedom.' The Soviet officials summoned cadets of the Red Army O.T.C., who opened machine-gun fire on the workers. Fifteen were killed and many wounded. The report concludes: 'bread has gone up in Sebastopol from 3,000 to 35,000 roubles per lb. The workers are facing starvation.' After the dockers, the railwaymen. Statistics of the Commissariat of Transport showed that during the year 1921 the 'railway courts' shot, on their own responsibility, 1,759 persons—employees and passengers alike.

The peasants have suffered no less than the other workers, under Soviet government. In the

¹ *Socialistichiski Viestnik*, No. 21.

country districts detachments of armed Soviet officials, calling themselves 'The Iron Broom,' collected the grain taxes; and 'often a peasant was shut up, in cold storage, in an icy shed, or taken out into the fields in winter, and tied to a stake by Red Guards, who then poured a pail of water over him, and gave him the choice of being left to freeze to death, or of revealing his real, or supposed, hidden store.' In 1921 the despair of some of the Volga peasants burst out into an effort to regain the freedom accorded to them by the Revolution of March 1917. They paid a terrible penalty. First the Red Army passed through the villages, shooting in each village a hundred or more inhabitants. 'Then, when they had gone, and we thought that the bitterness of death was past, came the *Cheka*, and the Revolutionary Tribunals; where the Red Army shot 100 men and women, they shot 300; and crazed by terror, neighbours, friends, relatives, denounced each other in a mad instinct of self-preservation.' In one concentration camp, that of Kozhonkov, near Moscow, 313 peasant hostages were interned; during the autumn of 1921 typhus raged in the camp, but no winter clothing was allowed. Earlier in the year a prison camp had been pitched at Kholmogory, the final syllable of which was singularly appropriate, as the shootings in this camp were estimated at 8,000. Those who were not shot perished slowly but surely of ill-treatment and neglect. During this same year the Petrograd

prisons were apparently becoming overcrowded, as 600 persons, drawn from various jails, were sent off to Kronstadt. At Kronstadt they were loaded on to barges, which were then scuttled at a spot where the water of the Neva is particularly deep.

In speaking of restrictions of personal liberty in Soviet Russia, by arbitrary and wholesale imprisonment, it is necessary to know what the prisons of the Soviet Government are like. The famous Lubyanka, the great prison of the *Cheka* in Moscow, 'the best-known building in Soviet Russia,' has been very fully described, from personal experience of its cells, and torture rooms, and execution chamber, by George Popoff.¹ A contributor to *Izvestia* has given a vivid description of his own experiences, after a year of Soviet rule, during a personal enquiry in Petrograd.² In the Tanganka Prison of Petrograd the cells were choked with typhus and fever patients, without bedding of any kind, and with no attendants. The prisoners' linen had not been washed for two months; they were undergoing a living death from vermin. In this prison there were over one thousand sick and hunger-stricken victims, many of whom were awaiting enquiry into their cause of arrest. The Governor of this prison estimated that 40 per cent of the deaths among the prisoners under his 'care' were due to lack of

¹ G. Popoff, *The Cheka*, 1925.

² *Izvestia*, December 4, 1918.

food. In February 1922 the Vyborg Prison, also in Petrograd, contained 'horrible shadows rather than human beings. All day long the place resounds with the moans of people dying of hunger.'¹ This was not in the famine year. The cells of the *Cheka* prison in Garokhovaya Street, Petrograd, were absolutely windowless, and measured 7 feet by 3½ feet. In 1922 Madame Samarodova, of the Social Revolutionary Party, was imprisoned for a month in a vault that had no window at all. In Baku industrial workers lay crowded with professional men in cellars, without any windows and suffocating with stench.² Madame R. M. Yondovicha, who was banished to the region of Dvinsk, experienced similar conditions in the transport prisons of Vologda and Viatka, in this year of 'entire peace' of 1921, and after the Soviet Government had enjoyed unfettered power in administration for four years:— 'It was late at night when we reached the transport prison at Vologda, and the staff met us with obscene abuse, before stripping us of most of our belongings, down to the few spoons and cups which seemed to us so precious in our desperate, helpless flight. In the female ward, in almost total darkness, 35 or 40 half-dead, half-alive creatures were crawling about, over a mass of filthy, disgusting mud, between walls plastered over with excretions and other nastinesses. Morning brought yet

¹ *Revolutsionnoye Dielo*, February 1922.

² *Revolutsionnaya Rossiya*, Nos. 33, 34.

another horror in the shape of the food, when we prisoners had served to us some fish in a state of putrefaction—not even gruel was issued. This prison of Vologda was a central prison, and therefore exiles passed through it, in a continuous stream and from every quarter of Russia. In the kitchens the utensils were never washed, and the dirt and the food were all cooked together in the boilers, holding a foul, greasy, permanently simmering mess of “soup.” At Viatka the women, stretched on the floor of the female ward, had mere tatters of garments and some were practically nude. Never have I spent a night of horror to equal that first night of mine at Viatka, for in addition, the room swarmed with vermin, and constantly my companions kept moaning and tossing in their sleep or begging water, as the majority of them were sickening for fever. When morning came seventeen of them had developed typhus; but they were not removed to hospital. At eight o’clock our “soup” was brought. It consisted of putrid chunks of horse-head, some scraps of horse-hair and hide, some rags, and morsels of a sort of jelly-like substance, all floating about together in a dark-coloured, evil-smelling liquid. With it went unpeeled potatoes. Yet upon this horrible concoction the women threw themselves with a perfectly animal avidity, and gulping it down, proceeded to fight even for the potato skins, before within a few minutes, in not a few cases, vomiting. And so the day dragged on, and in time was

replaced with the horrors of the night.¹ Since the close of 1922, deportations have taken place from Moscow to the Portaminsk prison camp, on the shores of the Arctic Ocean. Here there is neither cooking nor heating apparatus (in the Arctic); very little drinking water; and no medical attendance. Out of 5,000 prisoners in the Archangel prison camp in 1922, only 1,500 were alive at the end of the year. A year later, in 1923, a passenger on a Norwegian boat was able to observe this prison camp, as it is placed close to the quay. He noticed the pitiful state of the prisoners, due to semi-starvation and exhaustion. One day a steamer arrived for a transfer of some of the prisoners. They were loaded ‘like any dead cargo on board the steamer. Many of them were so weak as to be unable to stand, and were carried up the gangway, and dumped down in a dark hold among their unfortunate fellows.’

In 1923 the island of Solovetsky was added to the prison areas of the Soviet Government. Here over two hundred prisoners have been kept, in abject misery, and at the mercy of officials who are all ex-criminals, being chiefly *Cheka* employees convicted of offences against the Soviet code, or the rules of the *Cheka*. There is no power of complaint for the prisoners, who can be made to work 14 hours a day, are flogged, and are thrust into stone cells. The political prisoners, of whom there are over 200,

¹ S. P. Melgounov, *The Red Terror*.

are in a building made to accommodate 70. Here, also, there is no medical attendance. For eight months of the year Solovetsky is in complete isolation from the world. Official reports mention 'mass floggings,' not infrequently ending in death. In a special area of Solovetsky is the 'Kremlin,' where are felons, counter-revolutionaries, and ecclesiastics. Here merciless floggings take place; in summer prisoners are exposed naked until they are covered with mosquito bites; they are also put for seven days at a time into cells which have no light and are too small to allow the inmate to lie down; and in winter they are put into a tower the walls of which are coated with ice. The women, moreover, whatever their upbringing, are compelled to comply with the 'demands' of the officials. The conditions in Solovetsky are those of starvation, torture, assault, and outrage; and were unmitigated in 1924, the year when the English Trade Union Delegation in Moscow was embracing members of the Soviet Government, and assuring English workers that Soviet Russia was the 'hope of the workers of the world.'¹ If Dr. Nansen has not exhausted his philanthropic activity, a relief expedition to the prisons and concentration camps of Soviet Russia would give him ample scope; and there would be little difficulty in raising international funds for the succour of perhaps the most miserable sufferers on

¹ One member of the delegation, Mr. Ben Turner, made valiant efforts to go to Solovetsky, but was told by the Moscow authorities that the weather was not suitable for travelling.

the face of the earth. During the year 1927, prelates of the Orthodox Church were sent to the Solovetsky settlement.

To return to the year of peace, 1921. It was a year made notable in the records of the administration of the Soviet Government by the issue of a circular by the Central *Cheka*, under Dzerjinsky, authorizing the use of the 'old and proved remedy' for compelling prisoners to give information—the method of torture. The *Cheka* of Moscow emphasized this circular by licensing an official to continue the inquisitorial tortures for which he had been reported by less thorough-going colleagues. It is not necessary to enumerate the well-known varieties of torture employed by the innumerable *Chekas* distributed throughout Russia; each is revolting in its deliberate and fiendish cruelty; and the evidence for these official practices is both abundant and incontestable.¹ It is interesting to note that, far from torture being no longer used when peace descended upon Soviet Russia, the *Cheka* of Simferopol invented in this year 1921 two new tortures. One of these was the injection into the rectum of an enema of powdered glass; the other is too obscene for description.² The Soviet Minister responsible for the whole *Cheka* organization, Dzerjinsky, subsequently assumed higher office in the Soviet Govern-

¹ Full evidence of these methods of Dzerjinsky's administration will be found in *The Cheka*, G. Popoff, and *The Red Terror*, S. P. Melgounov. Also in the official bulletins of the *Cheka*.

² *Dielo*, June 27, 1921.

ment. It is to the honour of the American people that America has steadfastly refused recognition of a Government committed to a system of massacre and torture hitherto unknown in any civilized country. If these and other facts had been fully known to the people of England, their decision as to the continuance during ten years of the occupancy of Chesham House by representatives of the Soviet power would have been swift and conclusive.

The conditions of popular freedom in the second peaceful year, that of 1922, are full of interest for the student of Sovietism in action. In the first three months of the year 4,300 prisoners were shot, of which number 347 were executed in Moscow. There were 'mass shootings' in Yaroslavl, Saratov, Kazan, and Kursk. In January there was a regrettable incident at Kiev, where one of the female officials of the *Cheka* shot 80 prisoners by mistake. At Proskurovo, on January 18, 1922, 23 persons were shot. A resident in the town wrote to a friend: 'Be thankful you have got clear of Proskurovo. At least you have escaped the spectacle of wives, and mothers, and children waiting outside the *Cheka* buildings, on execution days.' Between February 28 and March 5, 2,500 sailors of the garrison of Petrograd were shot, on the ice of the frozen Neva, in front of the fortress-prison of Petropaulo. The newspaper published under the name of the *Revolutionary Cause*, the *Revolutsionnoye Dielo*, of March of this year,

gives a striking account of the execution of 60 persons at Petrograd: 'The shootings took place at a station on the Trinovskaya Railway. The prisoners were taken out at dawn, and told to dig their own graves. When the graves were half-dug they were told to strip, and were pushed into the holes and fired upon, one lot being pushed upon the top of the previous lot, till all the shallow graves were filled with dead and groaning.'¹ The *Cheka* Department, now renamed the State Political Department, or *Gosudarstvennoe Politicheskoe Upravlenie*, and known henceforth as the O.G.P.U., issued statistics for the shootings in April and May; the total was 1,108. On the night of May 7, 164 were shot, including 17 priests. In August of this year the present head of the Soviet Government, Stalin, observed that it *might* become needful 'to resort to terrorism.'

In June 1922 the trial took place, at Moscow, of 47 Social Revolutionaries. The distinguished Belgian statesman, lawyer, and Socialist, M. Vandervelde, defended the prisoners; and his speech was confiscated by the Moscow police, at all bookstalls and newsagents'. The judges were not lawyers, but three leading Communists; and tactics employed at other times were used also in this case, to stimulate popular feeling, resolutions being forced by the Government from towns throughout Russia, demanding the death penalty. In August of this year, 1922, detailed statistics

¹ *Revolutsionnoye Dielo*, March 24, 1922.

were published of the numbers executed by the Soviet Government, by means of the *Cheka*, during the four years of their power. It is significant that the list is headed by peasants.

Peasants	815,100
Intellectuals	355,250
Soldiers	260,000
Workmen	192,350
Officers	54,650
Police	59,000
Landowners	12,950
Doctors	8,800
Professors and Teachers	6,755
Priests	1,243
TOTAL	1,766,098

It was officially reported, in the following month of this year of complete peace, that 1,960,000 political offenders were in prison, a figure which did not include the prisons of Turkestan and of the Caucasian Republics. At Odessa a batch of executions was the method adopted to break a local strike. The futility of judicial appeals in Soviet Russia is illustrated by an official record of the shooting during 1922 of 519 political prisoners and 303 other prisoners pending their appeals.

During this year six prisoners succeeded in escaping from the concentration camp at Ekaterinburg. The Director of Penal Labour proceeded to the camp, from Moscow, selected 25 prisoners, and shot them out of hand 'as a warning to the rest.' A few months previously Dzerjinsky claimed, in an official memorandum, that the

Cheka ideal was 'vested with an integrity of crystal spotlessness.'¹ Lenin was less afraid to acknowledge the truth—'for every hundred decent members of the *Chekas* there are ninety-nine rogues.'

The organization of the *Cheka* does not control the freedom of the individual merely by the intimidation of torture and death. Doubtless the knowledge, among the 'broad masses of the people,' of the existence, in every town and many villages, of a *Cheka* building, with its bloodstained cellar, the scene of its 'questionings' and executions, and its terrible burying-ground where the bodies of the dead bear eloquent witness of the tortures employed, has cowed the whole population of Russia. A Government system such as the *Cheka* could have but two results: paralysing fear, or the rising of the whole people intent on sweeping away the terror from their midst. The Moscow Government took two precautions against the latter possibility. It instituted, throughout Russia, the use of hostages; and it created a marvellously efficient spy organization. The full Government approval of the use of the practice of hostage-seizure appears from the following recommendation issued by Dzerjinsky himself, in a localized edition of *Izvestia* published at Kiev on March 1, 1919: 'It would be well if all Social Revolutionaries now in custody were converted into hostages, and made to serve as guarantees for the good

¹ Dzerjinsky, Memorandum of February 17, 1922.

behaviour of their respective wings of the Social Revolutionary Party.' Both the hostage and the spy systems have been in full operation in the years since the conclusion of the civil war. In June 1921 an order issued by the Plenipotentiary Committee of the Soviet Central Executive Commission, the concluding words of which were, 'Let this order be carried out with the most ruthless severity,' required that 'the decree authorizing seizure of hostages shall be read to all villages guilty of concealing arms, and hostages shall be seized and shot, unless the arms first be handed over.'¹ That these decrees and order were 'ruthlessly carried' out would not be doubted by those who knew the previous records of the Soviet Government in regard to hostages. Thus, to give but one or two examples, in the preceding year a whole family of hostages was shot at Elizabetgrad, consisting of four children three to seven years of age, and their grandmother, aged 69; and in the same town in 1921, 36 hostages were killed. During the years 1921 and 1922, 313 peasant hostages were placed in the prison camp of Kozhonkov, including children whose ages ranged from infants of a month to boys and girls of sixteen. Typhus raged in this camp. Hostages were seized by the thousand in 1921, after the unavailing protest of the Kronstadt sailors. The famous Russian revolutionary Kropotkin was

¹ *Za Narod*, 'For the People,' No. 1. The order was issued on June 11, 1921.

moved to protest against this official system in an eloquent appeal to the Soviet Government: 'Have you not a single member sufficiently honest to remind his comrades that such measures constitute a return to the worst period of the Middle Ages, and demean a people undertaking to construct a new order of society? For we have come to a pass that a man may be imprisoned, not in punishment for any definite crime, but merely that you may be able to hold over your opponents the threat of his death. Is that not as though each morning you were to take a man to the scaffold and then to take him back to prison again and say, "Wait—not to-day!" Do you not realize that such things are a throw-back to the system of torture, and to a system which tortures not only the prisoner, but his relatives?'¹

The Soviet system of espionage might also be accurately described as a system of torture inflicted on the innocent. The spies of the *Cheka*, *alias* the *Ogpu*, are everywhere in Russia; and their activities extend throughout Europe and the East. A usual method of recruiting their ranks is to arrest girls and youths, women accustomed to the comforts of life, and the servants of foreigners. Then, under threat of death, they are released to act as spies. Well-educated daughters of the Russian middle or upper classes, who thought they might safely attend dances or musical parties at foreign Missions, have frequently been un-

¹ *Na Chouzhoi Staronyé*, No. 3.

deceived in regard to the illusion that any action in Soviet Russia is safe. They would be suddenly arrested at night, to the despair of their parents, and brought to the dreaded Lubyanka Prison, in a state of collapse from panic. Three days of solitary confinement would follow; then in the small hours of the morning—it is the habit of the *Cheka* to exercise its predatory activities during the hours which civilized men and women reserve for sleep—they would be brought before a tribunal of three men, and accused of complicity in a plot. Then they would be given the option of acting as a spy in the particular foreign Mission they had been accustomed to visit, with the duty of making a weekly report. If refusal met these proposals then the arrest of parents, sisters, friends, would be carried out, till the victims, half-crazed with fear for the lives of those dearest to them, at last submitted. The victims of this system are generally women typists, teachers, governesses, humble maids-of-all-work, cooks, chauffeurs, clerks, students, and professors. Sometimes the unhappy man or woman 'will disappear for a few days. Then they come back looking very white and explain that they have been ill. Sometimes the truth comes out in a flood of tears.'¹

One subtle and valuable result of this system is 'the profound suspicions of one another which divide all the Russian enemies of Bolshevism.' A resident in Pskov wrote in May 1921: 'Life

¹ *Russia To-day*, 1923, p. 32.

here is terrible. Spies swarm like ants; they are to be found in every house, in every tenement, in every street. It is as though we were living in a prison. Each man is afraid of the other, and brother looks askance at brother.'¹ There is not 'a sphere of life which the *Cheka* does not watch,' wrote the well-known *Cheka* official, Moroz. In order that the responsibility of the Soviet Government for what has been well called a diabolical system may be clearly understood—a responsibility shared by all the members of the Soviet Government, including those given friendly recognition in European countries and at Geneva, such as Tchitcherin and Litvinov—it will be well to quote in full an official document of 1922, entitled 'Duties of Secret Agents' for January of that year:

'All agents shall (1) keep under observation managements of factories, and educated workers in the same, and make sure of these persons' political opinions, and report any agitation or propaganda against the Soviet police in which such persons may engage. (2) Investigate any gathering purporting to have been organized for amusement (card playing and the like) only, but in reality for other ends, and if possible join in such gathering, and report to the authorities its real purpose and aims, and the names and surnames and addresses of all present. (3) Keep under surveillance all educated employees of

¹ *Roussky Courier*, May 1921.

Soviet institutions, and note their conversation and discover their political views, and where they spend their leisure, and in short communicate to the authorities any suspicious details. (4) Attend all intimate or family gatherings of an educated class, discover their trend of opinion, and learn who have been their organizers, and why they have been organized at all. (5) Watch for the holding of any communication between educated persons and the intelligentsia of a given district, and persons at home or abroad, and report upon the same accurately, and fully.¹

An espionage document of even greater interest is the circular issued by Dzerjinsky in March 1923, at a time when this Soviet Minister was People's Commissar for the Interior (Home Secretary) as well as head of the *Ogpu* (*Cheka*). This circular states that all the foreign secret agents of the *Cheka* are in future to be formed into a special branch, with foreign sections in the leading foreign towns. This branch was to form part of the Commissariat of the Interior, and be under the Assistant Commissary for Home Affairs, Comrade Medvedkoff. The London section was placed under Comrade Hoffman, and was given a special staff of secret agents, and an annual grant of £10,000. If this sum should prove to be insufficient it was to be supplemented by special credits, drawn from various sources, including the

¹ *Golos Rossii*, April 16, 1922.

Soviet Trade Delegation. The Soviet Trade Delegation, under the name of Arcos, occupied, as all Londoners know, palatial buildings of a rental estimated at £40,000 per annum, in Moorgate Street; it was also nominally installed in the late Russian Embassy, Chesham House, Belgravia. A further recommendation from Dzerjinsky was that posts in the consular service should be given to agents of the *Cheka*: 'The Commissariat of the Interior considers it extremely desirable that agents of the State Political Department (*Cheka*) should be given posts on the Soviet Consular Service in foreign countries, as this would enable them more easily to get into touch with Russian political refugee circles, and with persons desiring, for one reason or another, to visit Soviet Russia.'

Later information, that acquired by a personal visit to Russia by Mr. H. J. Greenwall, and published in an uncensored despatch in the *Daily Express* of September 14, 1927, gives a vivid account of the espionage under Soviet rule. Of the members of the G.P.U., Mr. Greenwall says: 'a man never knows when he may be talking to one. The conductor of a tram-car, your floor waiter, the barber, most certainly one of the hotel hall-porters, any or all of these people may be employees of the dreaded *Cheka* or G.P.U. "When I hear a car stop outside our house at night I am in a state of terror till it moves on," said a young woman . . . to me the other day. In the French Revolution people marked down by

the "Committee of Public Safety" were taken to the guillotine in a tumbrel. In Russia the G.P.U. fetches them in a motor-car, and has them shot in a cellar. That is all the difference.'

These documents justify the claim that the terrorism exercised over all Russians to-day, whether in Russia or abroad, is a carefully thought out system and one which 'pursues collective murder like a business.' The practice of killing hundreds and thousands of innocent hostages—the Soviet authorities admit to having shot 800 hostages to avenge the attempt on the life of Moses Uritzki, the chief executioner of the *Cheka*—may be, as Professor Sarolea says, 'a hideous return to savagery.' But it is wonderfully efficient, and is based on a profound knowledge of human nature. The O.G.P.U., writes a privileged observer of its methods, 'shows a diabolical cunning in the utilization . . . of every laudable human instinct—maternal love, conjugal love, filial love, friendship, gratitude, reverence. To find anything worse than the O.G.P.U. one must go a long way back into medieval history.' Incidentally, this is precisely what officials of the O.G.P.U. have done. The medieval custom of *socage* was revived by the Petrograd order that the peasants must give 100 days, annually, of forced labour to the Government, before they could work for a private employer. Also, utilizing a knowledge of ancient Norse history, these medievalists have revived a torture used by the early rulers of Norway—

that of introducing into the body of the victim a live rat which remains alive for the few moments needed for it to gnaw its way out. Ancient and modern indeed join hands, when the funds needed for financing the representatives of the *Cheka* in England have been augmented by means of the exquisitely appointed range of modern offices occupying the great building which was owned by 'Arcos' in Moorgate Street.

The statistics of shootings, continued through the years 1923, 1924, and 1925, may be briefly indicated, in proof that the use of terrorism by the Soviet Government is an established characteristic of Soviet administration. And it is interesting to preface the list with a resolution of the Præsidium of the Soviet Central Executive Committee, adopted on February 15, 1923. This resolution forbids the infliction of the death penalty by 'simplified methods' of taking the life of the condemned, 'which are universally practised at present, more especially in the outlying districts of the Republic, where barbarous methods of killing criminals are being applied.' In future executions are to be carried out only by shooting. The 'simplified methods,' universally practised, included throwing into boiling water, flaying alive, burying alive, and crucifixion. It will be noticed that nothing is said as to the prohibition of questioning by the 'old and tried' method of torture.

In the first two months of 1923 the Petrograd *Cheka* reported the shooting of 212 persons in that

city. The *Ogpu* reported 866 executions in January, February, and March. A case of international interest was that of the artist Chernikoff, the author Bergeo, and a son of Professor Ospensky, who were all three condemned to death for founding a branch of the Theosophical Society known as 'The Order of the Flaming Heart.' A death sentence was also accorded to the very distinguished economist of Petrograd University, Professor Raffalovitch. The sentence was anticipated by Professor Raffalovitch, who committed suicide in his cell in the Spalernaya prison. Private trading is, of course, still a penal offence in Soviet Russia except under Government regulations; and two Commissars were condemned to death for 'fostering private trade,' and themselves engaging in such trade. During the first nine months of 1923, the records of the Commissariat of Justice show the number of persons sent to hard labour, in Siberia, as 72,658. Of these, 40 per cent were registered as peasants or workmen.¹ A significant arrest for Englishmen thinking of visiting Russia occurred in January 1924. An English teacher named Berrol was on his way to the offices of the British Mission in Moscow, with a letter, when he was arrested in the street and taken to the Butyrka Prison. In the middle of February, Mr. Berrol was removed from his cell; and four weeks later it was reported that he had not been heard of since. Such disappearances

¹ George Popoff, *The Cheka*, p. 247.

among Russians are a commonplace of life in Soviet Russia; thus a report from Kiev for 1924 says: 'the present shootings are endless, but things are now done more circumspectly than formerly was the case. An inhabitant of Tambov would be sent to be examined in Saratov, or a Saratovian would be sent elsewhere, and so forth, so that all tracks may be covered up, and on a given person disappearing no one may be able to find him again.' Another illuminating record of the recent cases is that of the five unemployed who were given death sentences for having 'promoted disturbances in factories and cessations from industrial work.'¹

The inflicting, by the Soviet Government, of the death penalty on strikers throws into bright relief the courageous act of the miners of Atbaksara, when M. Jacobson was shot by sentence of the Soviet Tribunal of Omsk on August 12, 1924, for the offence of having written to the former English owners of the mines, with an account of ruinous conditions brought about by bad management. The letter was intercepted; and the death sentence duly carried out. M. Jacobson left a wife and five children utterly destitute. The miners thereupon gallantly faced death themselves by declaring a three days' protest strike.

Executions during the year 1925 include

¹ *Dni*, January 24, 1924. During the years 1923 and 1924 the *Cheka* developed a new form of activity in the creation of 'Communist fighting detachments' in foreign countries. George Popoff, *The Cheka*, p. 247.

members of factory committees, during the extensive strikes in the Central Urals, who were shot without trial during a strike movement involving 100,000 workmen; and the shooting of 58 persons without trial, by the Petrograd *Cheka*, on or about July 3, including the last Prime Minister of Russia under the old regime, the aged Prince Galitzin, who was earning his living as a shoemaker in Moscow; and also Baron Fredericks, an old man of 90, unable to walk. This year, it may be noted, was ushered in by an 'orgy of shooting,' without any form of public trial.

Recent years are notable, also, for widespread deportations and arrests. Thus in November 1925 an official account states that 3,000 persons were arrested in Moscow, in a single night, and banished to remote districts. During the summer of 1925, reports came of an intensified use of terrorism; and the many banishments to Siberia have included old and feeble women. If it were not for the horrors of the *Cheka* it would be pleasant to speak of a humorous note in Soviet annals, in the arrest, at a concert, held in Moscow, of 'the occupants of the four front rows of the stalls, who were arrested *en masse*, the object being to find out where they had obtained money to pay for their expensive seats.' A few months before this 'mass arrest' it was reported that the Transcaucasian *Cheka* had of late made much use of the 'wreath of death,' an iron strap with which the living victim's head is encircled. The 'wreath' is fitted at the ends with an iron nut and screw, by which the head is increasingly

compressed.¹ The *Cheka* of Odessa also showed its zeal by devising, recently, a new method of execution. The condemned man was made to walk along a dark passage with a cavity at the end; the executioners fired on him from embrasures in the walls when he fell into the pit, and thus they did not see his face. Doubtless this *Cheka* of Odessa was highly commended for so ingenious a device.

At one time during 1925 there were 1,500 persons imprisoned in a single concentration camp—that of Minsk; and in June of this year a police report notified the confinement of 90,000 persons in Soviet prisons, camps, and 'other places.' Of this number 89,000 had had no kind of trial, having been arrested by order of the Administration. Of these 90,000, 40 per cent were workmen, 28 per cent intelligentsia, 17 per cent peasants, 2 per cent 'socially dangerous persons'—presumably criminals—and 10 per cent 'old counter-revolutionaries.' It appears, therefore, that four years ago the Soviet rulers found themselves compelled to keep 90,000 workmen and others in confinement, for hostility to the Soviet Government. Is it surprising that the Russian workers, when not talking to order for the benefit of foreign Labour Delegations, say that the Soviet rule is 'not a dictatorship of the proletariat, but a dictatorship over the proletariat?'

In the spring of 1926 the fury for massacre, which inspired the Soviet rule in the early days of the Revolution, recurred in Southern Russia. Hundreds were shot, in one fortnight, in the

¹ *Dni*, May 13, 1923. *Socialistichesky Vestnik*, No. 15.

Black Sea districts, including 90 prisoners; and over 100 sailors were arrested. At Voronesh detachments of O.G.P.U. (*Cheka*) troops opened fire on a crowd of worshippers at S. Mary's Cathedral, killing 9 and wounding 15. In May there were 12,000 prisoners incarcerated in the prison island of Solovetsky; political prisoners were then confined, to the number of 7 or 8, in one small cell; the prison guards were all men deported for various offences; no new clothes were given, and as the heavy work given to prisoners wears out their clothing, many die of the cold of the Arctic winter; the food was very bad; floggings were frequent; and many prisoners were shot. Is the Howard Society no longer in existence, or does it now function only in the comfortable security of England?

The year 1927 is memorable in the record of Soviet executions for the sensation caused in England, among a public very imperfectly aware of the constant use, by the Soviet power, of individual and mass shootings, by the execution without trial of 20 prisoners, on June 9, as a reprisal for the death of Voikoff, a participant in the massacre of the Russian Royal Family. This reprisal shocked the members of the English Labour Party, and of the left wing of that party, the Independent Labour Party, who had apparently been living in a fool's paradise as regards the habitual methods of Soviet administration. Their protest, however, tactfully omitted to state that one of the 20 victims, a Finn, Colonel Elevelgren, according to Reuter, while still alive was taken 'to

the mortuary vault of the prison, where he was chained to a corpse, and so left for five days.' Towards the end of June 1927, shootings were reported in Leningrad, Moscow, Krasnoyarsk, Zhitomir, Kiev, Tiflis, Minsk, Saratov, Kzylorda, and Harkov; and it was observed that 'any Moscow or provincial newspaper, taken at random, now records daily numerous death sentences and executions.' It was at a Congress held in Moscow in this year that Krylenko, the Soviet Public Prosecutor, announced that over 2,000,000 persons had been thrown into prison within a year. Prisons were filled to overflowing, and everywhere churches and monasteries were being rapidly converted into jails.

In this same month a passenger from Vladivostok was able to give the *Scotsman* a vivid illustration of the Soviet way with strikers: 'The men at the docks gave notice that unless they got better conditions they would go on strike. An O.G.P.U. official came down when they stopped work, and read them a Bolshevik decree, in which it was said that if they were not back within an hour, every tenth man would be shot. Within fifteen minutes the men had all resumed.'¹ After the 'Arcos' raid in London in May 1927, some 500 persons were put to death, and over 2,000 were arrested. In July, 88 lamas were condemned to long terms of imprisonment at Verkne Vdinsk, near the Mongolian frontier: an illustration of the Soviet official hostility to all religion. The lamas were indicted for 'opposing the Soviet

¹ *Observer*, June 6, 1927.

decree disqualifying merchants and priests from administrative positions, and nationalizing the Buddhist monasteries.' During the last fortnight of 1927 the activities of the *Ogpu* fell heavily upon the peasants, 10,407 having been arrested in the seven provinces of Central Russia. In March 1928 the *Ogpu* executed 52 persons in three days, between March 20 and 23. This is some 17 per day.

The immediate question that rises to the lips of an Englishman, with a thousand years of hard-won liberty at his back, is, how comes it that the Russian people have not swept this unclean monster of an *Ogpu*, or *Cheka*, out of existence? The reply is that the first few months of the Communist *coup d'état*, under the mighty generalship of Lenin, gave all communications and all publications into the hands of the Soviet Government, where they have remained; therefore concerted action by the people of Russia is, as yet, impossible. And, further, the *Ogpu* or *Cheka* is not only an organization of fiendishly cruel civilian terrorists. The *Ogpu* has ample and highly disciplined troops for its own service, and where even mass executions fail to inspire obedience, machine-gun fire is successful. A description of the Government and *Cheka* headquarters in Moscow in 1923, at a date when internal peace had been established for two years, is an eloquent explanation of the apparent inertia of the Russian people: 'The Chon (*Cheka*) troops guard the Kremlin from street revolution, and occupy all the points of advantage, round the

Kremlin and the Lubyanka. A thousand are in the Kremlin; and one thousand are in the Sofieskaya Podvarnaya (formerly an hotel) on the Moscow River, opposite to the Kremlin; a third battalion is near the Kremlin; a fourth battalion is off Arbat Square; and three other battalions are in the centre of Moscow. The notorious headquarters of the *Cheka*, now the *Ogpu*, on the Lubyanka are surrounded by these picked troops, 2,000 of which are in this district. Probably no Government has ever made such a scientific study of the problem of suppressing a street revolution on the part of the oppressed proletariat as the Soviet Government has done.'

Zinovieff has declared that 'a most cruel and unrelenting Communist Dictatorship of the proletariat will be maintained in Russia,' and that, 'under no circumstances will the Communist Party relax its "iron grip" on the Russian people,' until the consummation of the World Revolution.¹

Zinovieff himself fell under the iron grip in 1927; but the system still endured. The record of the Soviet Government during its ten years of autocratic power, in regard to personal freedom, is a record for which history has no parallel. It is well summed up by the Spanish Syndicalist and Communist leader, Angelo Pertano, who went to Moscow as a delegate, hoping to find a workers' paradise. What he did find was 'a state of misery far worse than any tyranny hitherto known. . . . Never in the days of Tsarism did the Russian workmen suffer such an appalling and

¹ *Pravda*, May 8, 1923.

degrading yoke as the Soviet one. The freedom of striking is abolished now; during my stay at Tula Arsenal there were about 30 men punished for strikes, including eight men under penal servitude for striking . . . the Russian proletariat is reduced literally to the state of irresponsible animals.¹ Members of the Labour Party, Democrats, and Syndicalists, are of one mind in this regard. Colonel Wedgwood, no insignificant representative of the 'advanced' wing of the Labour Party in the House of Commons, declared, on returning from a visit to Soviet Russia, that the order maintained there is 'the order of brute beasts,' and added that the present dictatorship is as great a tyranny as was that of the Tsars. The Secretary of the British Miners' Federation, Mr. Frank Hodges, finds the Soviet Government not only the negation of personal freedom, but also the negation of democratic freedom: 'The Soviet is a cast-iron system, originating in an Asiatic mind, and contrary to the spirit of democracy.'² And, as Trotzky has told us, this international Soviet system, ruling now over so great a part of the globe, is very willing to enter, by stratagem or by force, through the gates of democracy, into the possession of the remaining countries of the world. To hold the gate is the first task, to-day, of the free democracies of all nations.

¹ *70 Days in U.S.S.R.*, by Angelo Pertano. Señor Pertano was delegated to Moscow, and expected to find an Eden. What he did find created a sensation in Spain.

² Speech in America, October 3, 1923.

CHAPTER VI

THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT AND INDUSTRY

'The Socialist system has proved a failure. We must return to commerce.'
 Lenin, Speech on the 4th Anniversary of the
 Revolution, October 1921

THE workers of the world are told a great deal concerning the industrial freedom and benefits enjoyed by the Russian workers, under the Soviet rule, inaugurated by Lenin. Two aims always transpire, beneath this flood of propaganda: firstly, to persuade the workers to start revolutionary movements; and secondly, to persuade capitalists to invest cash in the Soviet Treasury.

The first object is in strict accord with the fundamental teaching of Lenin, reiterated by his successor Stalin, that 'victorious revolution in one country has for its essential task to develop and support revolution in others.'¹ This extension of the Russian revolution to other countries is necessary, Stalin declares, in order to secure 'the organization of Socialist production.' So important does Stalin consider this dogma of industrial production that he quotes Lenin's own words whereby to reinforce his 'thesis': 'the task of the victorious revolution consists in doing "the utmost in one country for the development, the support, the awakening of revolution in other countries."²

¹ Stalin, *Theory and Practice of Leninism*, Eng. Ed., p. 45.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 45-46.

The second object has emerged from the practical experiences of the Russian rulers in endeavouring to conduct the industries of Russia by bureaucratic nationalism. Experience proved that this could only be done by living on national capital. And when a nation takes to living on its capital, the same results inevitably follow as with an individual; the international pawnbrokers are sought under the diplomatic alias of credit loans.

The genius of Lenin was far too astute and practical not to perceive the pedantic folly of applying the pure doctrine of Marx to the industries of Russia in 1918. Lenin was quite willing to authorize the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of Russian men, women, and children, at the hands of the *Cheka*; but the killing of the sources of money was another matter. Thus, within a few months of his seizure of all power in the name of the Workers and Peasants; and of the decree of November 14, 1917, by which the Workers' Control was established over production and distribution, the finances of all industrial undertakings, banks, companies, etc.; and that of January 28, 1918, nationalizing all industrial, banking, and trading organizations, Lenin was negotiating with leading Russian captains of industry, with a view to creating a State Trust for ten of the biggest metal factories in Russia—in other words, with a view to establishing State Capitalism.¹ He declared quite

¹ Michael Farbman, *After Lenin*, p. 39; and Makeev and O'Hara, *Russia*, 1925, p. 250.

openly that Russian industry had no hope save in 'the development of State Capitalism'; and in 1918 he was driving home this theory, after his wont, with hard facts. Workers' delegates came to him wanting their factories nationalized. This was his answer:—'I always said to them, "Well and good! We have the decree ready and can sign it in a moment. But tell me. Can you take the organization into your own hands? Have you gone into matters? Do you know how and what you produce? Do you know the relations between your production and the Russian and International market?" And inevitably it transpired that they knew nothing. There was nothing written about such matters in the Bolshevik text-books.'¹

But events in 1918 were too strong even for Lenin. It has been asserted that the decree issued by Lenin on June 28, 1918, contradicting his own industrial policy of State Capitalism, by ordaining the nationalization of the factories of Russia, was enacted with a quite other than industrial object. Germany, it is said, was about to lay hands on all those Russian industries in which German capital had been invested, to the amount of nearly £2,000,000,000.² By the decree of nationalization this sensible project on the part of Germany was instantly defeated. But, as generally happens, the expropriators in the long run merely expropriated themselves; and it was

¹ Michael Farbman, *After Lenin*, 1924, p. 43.

² *Ibid.*, *Bolshevism in Retreat*, p. 171.

not German but Russian industry that went into liquidation.

Forced to submit to the policy of Industrial Nationalization, Lenin chose the form best suited to his own autocratic will, and also the shortest road to industrial disaster, that of bureaucratic control. The Supreme Council of People's Economy was provided with 70 Provincial Branches and 60 Central Departments ; and to each of these creations was given the task of running an industry. Is it possible that Lenin was not perfectly aware of the industrial ruin which the erection, in the summer of 1918, of this machine would entail upon Russia ? No factory could get its own supplies ; or procure its own workers ; or even secure its own food rations. It could not decide its own programme of production.

For a short time the workers carried on their pathetic struggle for the control which had been promised to them in the watchword of the lying leaders of the Revolution of October 1917 : ' The land to the peasants ; the factories to the workers.' But their pitiful ' Workers' Control Factory Committees ' proved totally inadequate for the work required of them. In 1918, 45 per cent of the worker's income was provided by wages ; in 1920 this figure had fallen to 5·6 per cent, which meant that productive work was replaced by efforts at barter, or by wanderings into the villages in search of bread and potatoes. For two years the unhappy workers existed on accumulated supplies ; and on

ceaseless forcible requisitioning of food from the peasants. There ensued ' catastrophic lowering of productivity,' and a transforming of the workers ' into dependents of the State.'¹ There also ensued action by the peasants.

In a famous phrase Lenin once ardently desired to know of what ' the peasant is thinking when he lies awake at night '—those peasants who form 80 per cent of the population of Russia. By 1921 the peasant had thought out the proposition that to sow and reap and harvest broad acres in order to produce grain which was brutally taken from him, without compensation, was foolishness. So he restricted his sowings to the needs of himself and his family, and those of his village priest ; with perchance a little safely hidden away to provide for the acquisition of bare necessities of clothing and implements. He was very literally living from hand to mouth, under terror of barbarous requisitioning. A hideous guerilla warfare inevitably developed. Soviet officials tied peasants up to stakes in their own farmyards, in the Russian winter, poured a few bucketfuls of water over them, and left them to freeze to death. Peasants caught a Soviet official and sawed him in half with a wooden saw. And all the while the workers in factories and towns came nearer and nearer to starvation. Hard economic facts brought the Soviet rulers back to Lenin's industrial policy of 1918, that of State Capitalism. A complete

¹ Michael Farbman, *Bolshevism in Retreat*, pp. 171-186.

economic volte-face was called ; and in 1921 the 'New Economic Policy' or N.E.P., which was not really new at all, but the new name of the State Capitalism of the spring of 1918, was rushed into action. Decree followed decree, 'legalizing' the right of the individual to possess private property,¹ and to carry on private trade within Russia ; and the right of employers to pay by results. Foreign trade remained as strictly nationalized as before ; and, moreover, both private trade and private capitalistic initiative were placed under State regulation. The immediate result was that the workers were almost able to maintain a very miserable existence on the increase of wages—but not quite ; wages did not rise above 75 per cent of the Soviet worker's income. Production for home consumption increased thirty-fold, but remained below the figure for 1913. Eight years have passed since this dramatic attempt to combine a strict nationalization of all foreign trade with liberty of individual management in domestic trade. Since the beginning of 1925 the Soviet Administration has not been hampered by external or by civil war ; neither has it been handicapped by famine or blockade. It is therefore of considerable interest to see what Socialism in their time has achieved for the industries of the United Socialist and Soviet Republics, in 1925, 1926, 1927, and 1928.

¹ One of the first N.E.P. decrees, that of April 7, 1921, gave the worker the right to possess and to sell part of what he produced in the factories.

In January 1925 the delays in the payment of wages were so serious that a Conference was called to consider this question. According to the Soviet report of this Conference¹ it was stated that in the coal mines of both the Donetz and Moscow areas, from 18 per cent to 42 per cent of the wages of the miners were in unpaid arrears in January ; and the metal workers were in similar plight. During this month the State Sugar Trust owed the workers nearly the average monthly wage given in that industry. The delays in payment lasted, in some cases, for two or three months. Doctors and teachers suffered similar delays. These conditions were aggravated by the payment, in the case of the Donetz miners, of 60 per cent of their wages in kind, i.e. by the truck system, made illegal many years ago in England ; with the added Soviet touch that the Co-operative Societies on which these orders were made were unable to deliver the goods, owing to their own scarcity of stock. Meanwhile the Soviet Trade Unions punctually exacted their own dues from the wageless workers. The causes assigned for this state of the mining, metal, and sugar industries are illuminating. They were : sums owing to the industries, by the State, remaining unpaid ; over-production in the industries irrespective of the capacity of markets ; use, for production, of sums properly allotted to wages. The report added that such private undertakings as existed, under the new system, paid 50

¹ *Economiticheskaia Zhizhn*, January 30, 1925.

to 100 per cent higher wages, and paid them punctually. Another sidelight on the lot of the Soviet worker, in the spring of 1925, appears in *Trood*, the official organ of the Soviet Central Trade Union Committee. In reporting a Congress of Miners held in Moscow in April of that year, it was pointed out that workers elected on to the Joint Boards of Management voted for a reduction in wages, becoming more managers and less workers in their sympathies; and that Trade Union funds were being expended on officials' salaries, and banquets, and also were depleted by thefts, embezzlements, and frauds.¹

In the summer of 1925 a Plenary Meeting was held of the Central Committee of the Russian Metal Workers' Union. The Russian metal workers constitute about 30 per cent of the total number of Russian industrial workers. *Trood* reported the following conditions of this great industry:² Unemployment existed to an alarming extent; the total amounted to 10 per cent of the workers in the industry, and the figure was steadily increasing. The position was aggravated by the presence of 'professional unemployed, who have lost aptitude or desire for work, and who live solely on the Trade Unions.' Unemployment Insurance Relief was only given to 26 per cent of the unemployed workers, and when the men did get it, the amount paid was only 30 per cent of the

¹ *Trood*, February 17, and April 7, 1925.

² *Ibid.*, May 19-20, 1925.

average wage. The Meeting accused the Soviet Government of 'systematic opposition to any increase in wages.' Real wages were falling.

A special report was given, at this Congress, on the conditions regarding protection of labour in the metal industry; it appeared that accidents were very numerous, amounting to nearly 150 per 1,000 workers per year, and were on the increase. These accidents were greatly increased by the adoption of piece-work. At the Nicolaeff Works the number of accidents in January was 652, in May 962.¹ It was stated that technical protective measures were hardly ever applied. Women did night work; young persons of 16 to 18 years of age did arduous work; and the percentage of young persons falling sick was often almost 50 per cent of the total employed. The quality of the clothing served out is very poor. The report regretfully observes that it is prejudicial to the health of the workers when there is only one bed for three workers, who sleep on it in turns. The absence of proper water supply also promotes the increasing disease among the workers.

The housing conditions of this, one of the principal of Russian industries, in 1925 should be full of interest to advocates of the Soviet system. 'The workers,' says *Trood*, 'are almost without exception living in insanitary, and often in dangerous, conditions. In not a few cases workers had no lodging whatever, and were compelled to

¹ *Ibid.*, November 25, 1925.

pass the night in the factory, or the street.¹ In the Donetz area 70 per cent of the workers were living in insanitary barracks, with an average space of 4 square yards per head. Engineers had only 3 square yards assigned to them, or even, in the Ural area, only 2 square yards, in the factories wherein they were lodged. In some factories workers slept under furnaces, or by the side of the machines. Whole families lived on the planks of the workshops. To supply sufficient housing for the metal workers' industry would require an expenditure of 230,000,000 roubles. Nowhere is the Act of the Soviet Labour Code which fixes the space per head observed. A rider, tragic in its impotence, was attached to this report of the Metal Workers: 'The Union is of opinion that the State industry displays an insufficient interest in the question.' Why should a Soviet Government, preoccupied with the expenses of fomenting revolution throughout the world, expend thought and money on the housing of such 'machine fodder' as the Russian metal workers?²

Yet another echo comes from the voices of the Russian people in 1925. This time it is the Postal, Telegraph, and Telephone workers who are meeting, in Moscow, in June. They report

¹ The average housing accommodation is barely 40 per cent of that ordered by the Soviet Labour Code.

² At the Seventh Congress of the Metal Workers held in November 1925, the average wages were stated to be 62 per cent and 64 per cent of 1913, the cost of living being doubled. Owing to lack of raw material, of fuel, and to defective equipment, and to bad housing, production was 48 per cent of pre-war rate. *Trood*, November 19-29, 1925.

that their average wage was 50 per cent below the pre-war figure, although the Soviet State was showing at that time 'an excess of revenue over expenditure.' In some provincial areas the wage was even lower. Insanitary dwellings supplied deplorable housing conditions. Fifteen per cent of the employees were out of work.¹ It is not difficult to ascertain in what directions the 'excess of revenue' was being spent by the Soviet Government, while the workers of Russia were living in sections of insanitary houses, on miserable wages, spasmodically paid.

In this same summer a Circular Letter was issued by the Central Council of Russian Trade Unions, declaring that workers were deterred from joining the Unions by the compulsory contributions demanded from unionists, amounting to 10 per cent or 12 per cent of their wages, for the Association for the Development of Chemical Warfare, the Association for the Promotion of the Aerial Fleet, and the Association for the International Support of Revolutionary Parties. This Circular was issued on July 18, 1925, with the delightfully naive declaration, 'There is no intention, this time, of talking merely to impress foreigners.'

The record of Russian industrial conditions in 1925 may be rounded off with a few detached items. On July 1 the unemployed in the city of Moscow, the capital city of the Soviet Government, numbered 144,000, and the unemployment

¹ *Trood*, June 6-13, 1925.

figure for the country was 1,200,000, with a marked tendency to increase.¹ The percentage of unemployed in receipt of relief was 20 to 25. And in August a report was issued showing that 60 per cent of the machinery operated by Russian workers needed replacement.²

The year 1926 opened with the Seventh Congress of the Russian Building and Workers' Union. Reports showed that seasonal workers worked 16 hours per day at a wage of 50 kopeks (=one farthing in English money). The workers on State enterprises were working on a 10 and 12-hour day, but were only paid for the statutory 8-hour day, in defiance of the Labour Code. Housing conditions were stated to be deplorable. It was also pointed out that accidents were very numerous—438 were registered in Moscow alone, in 18 months; and that the Labour Commissariat had as yet (after nine years in power) done practically nothing for the protection of the workers from accidents. In the State enterprises the whole question of protection for the worker was utterly ignored; and the President of the Union condemned the authorities for 'culpable negligence.'³

These are the conditions, as portrayed by the workers themselves in their own publications, of the mining, metal, and building industries, and of the postal, telegraph, and telephone employees. In March 1926 the Eighth Congress of Russian

¹ *Izvestia*, July 9, 1925.

² *Economiticheskaja Zhizhn*, August 20, 1925.

³ *Trood*, February 7, 1926.

Railwaymen sat in Moscow, and is very frankly reported in *Trood*. It is a report that should be broadcasted among English railwaymen whenever they are being incited to support a demand for a resumption of relations between England and the Soviet Government, in order to prolong the Soviet rule over the Russian people. The average wage of the Soviet railwayman was 74 per cent of the wages in 1913, and the cost of living was more than double.¹ The railways were being worked at a loss, despite a 41 per cent increase of traffic. Owing to inadequate supplies of material from the State Industry Department, and the lessening of output, repairs to rolling stock were never done to time; and rolling stock was in very bad condition. Permanent ways, bridges, and stations all needed urgent repairs. Payment of wages was always in arrears. Accidents were rapidly increasing; and this item of the report followed naturally from the further statements that the staff frequently forgot to close the signals after the passage of a train, and that the rails often remained unriveted for weeks because no one had thought of inspecting them. There can be no dull moments while travelling by rail in Soviet Russia. In the five months previous to February 1, 1926, 31 engines and 700 wagons met with fatal accidents. In local stations one man would be found acting as signalman, porter, guard, and cleaner. The hours of work fixed by the

¹ On February 1, 1926, the cost of living in Soviet Russia was 200 as against 100 in 1913. *Economiticheskaja Zhizhn*, February 23, 1926.

Soviet Labour Code were constantly exceeded; the statutory 8-hour day was never observed; the men often had to work on into the night and even to call in the help of their wives and children; there was scarcely a line where the weekly rest of 42 consecutive hours, enjoined by the Labour Code, was observed; and most engine-drivers and conductors were on duty for 20-24 hours on end. Less than a third of the railway workers had any kind of housing; and many lived in disused railway wagons.¹

The peasant, in Russia, is so dominant a partner both in the State and in industry that a complete chapter must be allotted to him. In passing it may be noted that in this year of 1926 a Congress of the Union of Agricultural and Forestry Workers was held at Moscow, and that the usual report was put in of disregard of the Soviet Labour Code regulations; of wages falling as low as 5 to 6 roubles (10s. to 12s.) per month; of the arrears in payment of even this miserable pittance; and of workers leaving the Government farms because of the low wages given. It was also stated that the Soviet Government Labour Inspectors, charged to protect the interests of the workers, numbered 65 to the 8,186,144 square miles of Soviet territory. This represents some 33,300 workers per inspector, covering 126,000 square miles. Oppressed, perhaps, with the physical impossibility of inspecting 33,300 persons scattered over an area as large as Norway,

¹ *Trood*, March 11-21, 1926.

these inspectors flag in their duties, 'frequently contenting themselves with taking tea with a Superintendent, and then departing without any enquiry as to the conditions of the workers.' The agricultural labourers were working 12-14 hours per day, and were housed in practically uninhabitable stables and tumble-down huts, in defiance of the Soviet Labour Code. No effort was recorded to secure obedience to the Code.¹

At the Fifth Congress of the Russian Miners, held at Moscow in May 1926, more evidence was given of the moribund nature of the Soviet Labour Code under Soviet administration—that Soviet Code upon which European authors and journalists have wasted, and still waste, so much admiring energy. The miners were stated, at this Congress, to be working an 8-9-hour day and technical experts from 10-12 hours per day; the Soviet Labour Code day being 6 hours. There was an increase of 38 per cent in the accidents, over the previous year; and serious and fatal accidents were more numerous. Only 42 per cent of the Soviet mines were adequately ventilated; and only 37 per cent of the miners' lamps were efficient. Overtime was worked, and the bad housing conditions added to the exhaustion of the miners. The miner got only 5-6 square yards of housing space. The supply of Inspectors was deficient; and there were practically no First Aid stations in the mines. The injured and sick had to be taken some five or

¹ *Ibid.*, January 19-31, 1926.

six miles to the nearest medical aid; and in winter they often died from the cold on the journey. The Siberian gold mines had no hospital; and patients had to be transported eighteen hundred miles. In the Donetz Basin one doctor examined 150 patients per day.¹ It is quite easy to die when engaged in the mining industry in Soviet Russia. The profits obtained by the Soviet State Industrial Coal Industry, in the financial year 1925-1926, were 450,000,000 roubles.²

In the Textile Industry the same conditions obtained.³ At the Seventh Textile Congress, held at Moscow in May 1926, it was stated that production was only 50-60 per cent of that of 1913; and that wages averaged 1.87 chervonetz rouble (about 2s. 5d.) per day. The principle of piece-work was applied throughout the industry. The Directors of the State Textile Undertakings were urging a cut in cost of production by reduction in social insurance, in upkeep of hospitals and clubs, and in 'occupational education.' A Moscow delegate reiterated the usual housing conditions. The textile workers, he declared, were inhabiting houses in ruins, and had not more space than 3 square yards per worker, which they occupied under appalling sanitary conditions. If the worker slept in a space a few yards square in a half-ruined factory, the factory management charged a rent. As a measure of economy the supply of

¹ *Trood*, May 12-22, 1926.

² *Montanistische Rundschau*, November 1, 1926.

³ *Trood*, May 12-22, 1926.

drinking water had been cut off in the workers' dwellings, and in the factories. 'The Employers' Organization,' says *Trood*, 'are spending funds destined for the improvement of the condition of the workers on other objects.'¹ This was written in May 1926. It is still fresh in English memories that the Soviet Government subsidized the English General Strike and the coal strike, in 1926, with grants amounting to some £500,000,² hoping thereby to promote the arrival of revolution in England. A tenth part of this sum would have alleviated at least some of the workers' misery, under nationalization, in Soviet Russia.

These samples of conditions prevailing in 1926 in separate industries may be completed by the report on 'Conditions of Labour in Russia' read at a Plenary Assembly of the Central Council of Russian Trade Unions in June of that year. The President of the 'Labour Protection Department' of the Commissariat of Labour said that the fact of over a million unemployed having been registered had not deterred the imposition of longer hours of work; thus in the Ukraine 30 per cent of the workers were working for a 9-9½ hours' day. Night work had been authorized for women; also heavy classes of work. Factories were infringing the Soviet Law restricting the number of young persons employed in factories. Accidents were very numerous, and were increasing; a large part of the safety devices being

¹ *Ibid.*, May 18, 1926.

² Statement by the Government, House of Lords, June 17, 1926.

worn out.¹ The Labour Commissariat gave the following figures :—²

Average number of accidents reported in	
1922	51·7
1923	76·8
1924	165·1
1925	204·1

During 1925, accidents had increased per 100,000 working days, from 2,170 in January to 3,330 in November.

It is of interest to note that figures published in February 1926 showed that approximately 60 per cent of all the wage-earners in Russia were paid by piece-rates. On January 1, 1926, the total unemployment figure of trade unionists was estimated at 1,029,000; and of all workers at about 2,050,000;³ and it was stated that relief was only given to 30 per cent of the registered unemployed, and amounted to only 7·3 to 11 roubles (14s. to 22s.) per month. Of all unemployed workers, 40 per cent received no relief, either in payment or in paid work.⁴

The unemployment figure for trade unionist workers had increased by April 13, 1926, to 1,182,500, an increase in a year of 19·1 per cent.⁵ The President of the All Russian Trade Unions, Tomski, announced at a Conference held in October 1926, that small employees of Soviet Russia earned 80 roubles per month, 'a sum just

¹ *Trood*, June 10, 1926.

² *Voprosy Trooda*, April 1926, No. 4, pp. 52-56.

³ *Statistika Trooda*, No. 3, 1926.

⁴ *Voprosy Trooda*, February 1926, p. 24.

⁵ *Trood*, October 22, 31; November 12-26.

sufficient to give them enough to eat,' said Tomski; but in urban areas 73 per cent could only earn less than 80 roubles a month, so presumably went hungry.

Altogether, 1926 was not a happy year for the workers of Russia; especially as the cost of living index-number rose from 200, at the end of 1925, to 240 in May 1926.

These official statistics, issued by the Soviet Government, throw a brilliant searchlight on the actual conditions of miners, metal workers, builders, textile workers, and land workers in Soviet Russia in 1925 and 1926. The official Soviet statistics for December 1926 and for 1927 reinforce those of the two previous years. Here are a few examples. A delegate to the Seventh Russian Trade Union Congress stated that: 'There is no single railway on which the regulations concerning hours of work have been observed, although there exists for this purpose a special Decree of the Commissariat of Labour. Labour is exploited just as if there were no labour legislation at all.'¹ The wages figures for 1927 may be conveniently summarized in the table on page 150. In considering the wages paid it must always be remembered that the cost of living in Soviet Russia has increased from an index-figure of 100, in 1913, to the figure of 240, in May 1926; in other words it has more than doubled; and that even this figure had risen by another 10 per cent (over the previous 18 months) in June, 1927.²

¹ *Ibid.*, December 12 and 14, 1926.

² *Economicheskoe Obozrenie*, June 1927.

SOME SAMPLE WAGES IN SOVIET RUSSIA OFFICIALLY REPORTED IN 1927

<i>Class of Worker.</i>	<i>Monthly Wage in Roubles.</i>	<i>Monthly Wage in English Money.</i> £ s. d.	<i>Reference.</i>
Agricultural Workers, Province of Saratov:			Report of Cen. Committee of Union of Agricultural and Forestry Workers
Male Workers	15.34	1 11 0	<i>Three Months in Russia</i> , W. J. Brown, 1928
Female Workers	10.65	1 1 6	<i>Trood</i> , May 25, 1927
Coal and Iron Mining, Ukraine.	66.66	—	<i>Three Months in Russia</i> , W. J. Brown, 1928
Postal and Telegraph Workers	64	6 4 0	<i>Trood</i> , May 27, 1927
Metal Workers, Ukraine	73.24	3 13 6	<i>Three Months in Russia</i> , W. J. Brown, 1928
Sugar Workers	36.57	—	<i>Trood</i> , June 8, 1927
Chemical Workers, Ukraine	75.25	1 10 0	<i>Three Months in Russia</i> , W. J. Brown, 1928
Wood Workers	15	—	<i>Nachta Gazette</i> , May 10-24, 1927
Building Workers, Ukraine	58.40	6 6 0	<i>Three Months in Russia</i> , W. J. Brown, 1928
State Employees	66.2	—	<i>Trood</i> , March 16-20, 1927
Textile Workers, Ukraine	84.25	4 1 0	<i>Three Months in Russia</i> , W. J. Brown, 1928
Teachers	40.9	—	<i>Izvestia</i> , February 23, 1927
Railwaymen, Ukraine	66.88	9 2 0	<i>Three Months in Russia</i> , W. J. Brown, 1928
Doctors	92	—	<i>Trood</i> , August 11, 1927
Leather Workers, Ukraine	84.15	3 0 0	
Seamen	30	—	

The production of the State Industrial Undertakings was still, in 1927, below the pre-war level; and the State Industries were demanding a 13 per cent increase of individual output.¹

¹ *Ibid.*, October 11-18, 1927.

Wages ranging from a minimum of 5s. per week to a maximum of £1 11s. per week, with the cost of living doubled, would represent something less than a starvation figure for the Russian worker of 1927, if he stuck entirely to productive or administrative work. Such wages mean, of course, exhausting efforts at extra means of subsistence. But even these wages are not available for all Soviet citizens. The *Daily Herald* of October 22, 1927, reports the Chairman of the Supreme People's Economic Council, M. Kuibysheff, as stating that the unemployment figure for the winter of 1926-27 amounted to 8,500,000 persons. At a Plenary Meeting of the Central Council of Russian Trade Unions, held at Moscow, October 10-15, 1927, it was reported that 20 per cent of the membership of the Trade Unions were unemployed, and that unemployment was increasing. Only 50 per cent of the unemployed got any insurance benefit; and those who did get it only received 12-14 chervonetz roubles *per month* (24s. to 28s.).¹ The Supreme People's Economic Council does not appear to be able to save the Russian worker from supreme misery. And these figures do not relate entirely to adult labour. The representative of the Young Communists at the Seventh Congress of the Russian Trade Unions, held at the end of 1926, declared that there were more than one million young persons, under 18 years of age, out of employment. Unemployment, in the once prosperous province of the Ukraine, increased 39 per

¹ *Trood*, October 11-18, 1927.

cent in 1927, the figures rising from 177,100 in October 1926 to 246,300 in April 1927.¹

The details of the prevalence of accidents in Soviet industry, already given for 1925 and 1926, are quite as startling for 1927. According to the reports given at the All Russian Congress on Industrial Hygiene and Safety,² held in Moscow in May 1927, the steady rise in accidents was:—

First quarter of 1926, per 1,000 workers,	23.3	accidents
Second " " "	26.3	"
Third " " "	28.2	"

And it will be remembered that the medical services for these increasing accidents are either deficient or non-existent.

A noticeable feature of an official report in October was the protest that a reduction in prices was accompanied by a cut in quality. Thus the cheaper 'woollen' goods had more cotton than wool in their make-up—and this for wear in the Russian winter.³

Four years of industrial conditions such as these is the latest gift of the Soviet Government, a Government by no means impoverished, to the workers of Russia. It is a tragedy the more moving in that the dawn of such conditions of healthful and happy labour as are the human birth-right of every man and woman seemed to be breaking over Russia in the summer of 1917. And now what can be said in the face of such squalor, such poverty, such helpless, sordid misery, but that Tolstoian lament sung by the peasant: 'Woe

¹ *Trood*, July 28, 1927.

² *Ibid.*, May 27, June 2, 1927.

³ *Ibid.*, October 11-18, 1927.

to you, poor hungry folk, darkness comes once more over the land.'

The Soviet reports for 1928 disclose industrial conditions heading for disaster. The official account of the great Donetz mining area is one of failure in production, sabotage of tools and machinery, and miserable living conditions for the miners. 'Economic disorders' included such incidents as the appointment of a medical practitioner as chief director of a timber department. A metal 'famine' was reported; and also a textile 'famine'; and the bread shortage, even in Moscow, was acute. In July the Soviet Government, fearing famine, was buying grain in greater quantities than had been known since 1919-1920. In this month it was reported that 23 per cent of private enterprises in the once flourishing province of the Ukraine had closed down. In September the unemployment figure for the U.S.S.R. was estimated at 3,000,000; and yet the working day of the agricultural workers was 13-14 hours. In the metal industry unemployment had doubled. The textile workers had less than a living wage. In November the official organ of the Soviet Trade Unions, *Trood*, was asking why 'an all-round famine continues to be a constant feature of the workers' lives; why there are endless bread queues; and why there is something wrong with every commodity you touch.'¹

¹ *Pravda*, February 7-14, 1928; *Trood*, February 15-29 and November 1928; *Golos Textilei*, April 3-11, 1928.

CHAPTER VII

THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT AND THE LAND

'The man of the future, in Russia, is the peasant.'—HERZEN.

THE Soviet Government rode into power eleven years ago on the tactical use of two popular cries: the land for the peasants, the factories for the workers. The Russian people, hungry for land, hungry for industrial as well as political freedom, seized eagerly on these promises. The peasants had indeed been carrying out agrarian reforms during the whole seven months of the reign of the Provisional Government, prior to the Bolshevik *coup d'état* in October. And peasant congresses, held throughout that spring and summer of the 'sunniest' of peaceful revolutions, resulted in a combined mandate (*Nakaz*) of two hundred and forty-two of these conferences, which proclaimed the land to be the property of all the people.

This mandate represented the programme of the Peasant Reformers of the Social Revolutionary Party, known as the *Narodniki*. It is the *Narodniki*, the Peasant Russia Group, which became the 'general staff' of the Peasant Parties, as admitted by Zinovieff in his speech at the Third Soviet Congress of the U.S.S.R., in May 1925. Zinovieff devoted the greater part of this crucial pronouncement on the internal policy of the Moscow

Government to the necessity of facing the fact that now, in 1925, 'only an agreement with the Peasantry can save the Socialist Revolution (i.e. the Soviet Government) in Russia.' He declared that 'the essence of our present policy is based upon the wide peasant masses,'—and again: 'we are staking on an alliance with the wide masses of the peasantry.' He laid great emphasis on the fact that every means must be taken to ensure success, in this last throw of the Soviet Government, in view of the admittedly increasing strength of the Peasant Russia Group. He urged that 'it is for us proletarian revolutionists to make every effort to understand the real thoughts of the real peasant, and to know what the peasant is thinking when he lies awake at night.'¹

An anecdote popular in Russia six years ago would have helped to enlighten the Soviet Government on the problem of what the peasant thinks of when he lies awake at night. A peasant deputation had gone to see Lenin. 'Well, *deduska*—little grandfather,' said Lenin, to the oldest peasant of the deputation, 'you should be satisfied now; you have the land, the cattle, the fowls; you have everything.' 'Yes, God be blessed,' replied the leader of the deputation, 'Yes, little father, the land is mine, but you take the bread; the cow is mine, but you get the milk; the chickens are mine, but you have the eggs. The Lord be blessed, little father!' There are two other things

¹ Zinovieff, *Russia's Path to Communism*, 1925, *passim*.

of which the seventy-one millions of peasants of 'Holy Russia' think, both when they lie awake at night, and as they till their hard-won lands by day. They perceive that the officials and emissaries of the present Government are intent on eliminating both religion and family life from the villages. The church is to be closed or turned into a public hall for lectures and dances; the children are to be taken away to Government 'Homes'; marriage is to be a matter of temporary convenience.¹ And religion and wife and child are things the Russian peasant holds dearer than life itself. The stubborn war which he has waged with the alien fanatics of Communism, during eleven years, has left him victorious in the preservation of his faith, and victorious in the preservation of his home. There remains the issue of his third battle front, the battle of the people of Russia led by the democratic Peasant Russia Group, the *Narodniki*, for the recovery of material freedom. As we have seen, the Third Soviet Congress of the U.S.S.R. was left in no doubt, in 1925, as to the vital nature of this struggle; the continued existence of the Soviet rule depended, they were clearly told by Zinovieff, 'on an agreement between the proletariat which is exercising its dictatorship, and the majority of the peasant population.'²

The struggle of the peasants seemed, at first

¹ It is unnecessary to quote the well-known decrees of the Soviet Government making marriage a civil contract, binding merely so long as each party wishes. The formality of divorce is hardly a formality at all.

² Zinovieff, *Russia's Path to Communism*, p. 12.

sight, a forlorn hope. The masters of Petrograd and Moscow, the executioners of the Imperial Dynasty and of a not inconsiderable part of the Russian people, the improvised Government which could make a Brest-Litovsk treaty with Germany, and which was gradually admitted to diplomatic relations with European Powers, the creators of the *Cheka*, and of the Red Army, could surely afford to treat the peasant as a negligible quantity. This is precisely what the Moscow Government did. It is exactly what might have been predicted as the course of action of a group of town-bred political fanatics, men who had lived the feverish life of 'underground' revolutionaries, nourished mentally on the theories of Karl Marx and on 'theses' read and discussed in the political clubs of Europe. How should these men apprehend the sanity, the stability, the insight, the sagacity of the man who lives closely companioned by Mother Earth? The history of the struggle between the forces of reason and stability in the villages, and the forces of violence and revolution in Moscow, during the last eleven years in Russia, is an epic of heroic proportions.

At first these two opposing forces seemed to be hardly aware of each other's existence. Directly after his seizure of power, Lenin entered into a momentary alliance with the party of democratic reform, the *Narodniki*, representing the peasants. The result was the decree of November 8, 1917, declaring that the 'land is handed over for the use

of the toiling population.' In his speech proposing this decree Lenin declared that the share of the democratic *Narodniki* in constructing the decree mattered not at all: 'What is essential is that the peasants get an unshakable conviction that there are no more landlords in the villages. Let the peasants themselves solve all the problems; let them themselves arrange their life.'¹ The decree announced the handing over of all land, buildings, and live stock to land-committees, and Soviets, of peasant deputies. Having thus temporarily appeased the peasants' land hunger, the Moscow Government applied itself to creating administrative machinery, to the question of war or peace with Germany, to pouring out decrees, to strengthening its hold on the town populations, and to promoting world revolution. The village was left alone.

The village showed itself perfectly competent to act. Throughout the previous year, indeed, the villages had been acting, while Lenin and his colleagues were talking. Estates had already been seized, timber cut, live stock and implements appropriated. Now, in 1918, the general distribution of the land was carried out by the peasants themselves, with few disorders or reprisals on the landowners. 'Thrown solely on their own resources the peasants carried out the land partition quite after their own fashion, quite peaceably and as fairly as could be expected. In

¹ Lenin, Speech of November 8, 1917 (October 26 O.S.).

this way a land distribution on a scale unheard of in the past was effected by the people themselves, without land surveyors.'¹

This happy immunity from the administrative activity radiating from Moscow did not last longer than six months. The first agrarian act of the Soviet Government was an endeavour to meet the urgent need of the peasants for agricultural machinery and implements, and other manufactured goods, all of which had been nationalized by Government decrees. The Communist theory is that money being the primal curse of man, all trade must be carried on by communal barter; and that the crops of the peasants should be exchanged for the products of the nationalized factories. The authorities got as far as filling warehouses and factories with the needed goods, but here the State machine ceased to function. The factory 'committees' frequently prohibited the removal of the goods from *their* factories; and the railway committees appropriated most of what did get despatched. Finally a small part of the original stocks, worth a thousand million gold roubles in value, reached the rural food committees—food, it must be remembered, was already, in 1918, becoming scarce—but only to be captured by speculators. The peasant was obliged to buy what was available, at exorbitant prices, from those speculators. To take one single example. At Harkov a huge factory was stored with stacks

¹ Makeev and O'Hara, *Russia*, p. 255.

of agricultural machinery which the Commissars in Moscow had ordered to be manufactured in two weeks 'on pain of punishment for sabotage.' We have seen what *Cheka* punishments are like. The machinery was promptly made, by the terrorized workers. But the Government omitted to hold their distributive officials under threat of the *Cheka*; and the machinery, for which the peasants were clamouring, and for which they would have 'paid' in grain, lay idle for six months in the Harkov warehouse. As the food committees failed to deliver the goods to the peasants, the peasants naturally ceased to supply the committees with grain. The Provisional Government, during its six months of happy democratic power, was able to collect eight million poods of grain. In the following June the Soviet Government could only collect less than one million.

Having failed to get the necessary grain for the food of the towns by the 'goods exchange' system, through the absence of the 'goods' part of the bargain, Moscow reverted to its habitual weapon of compulsion and class-hatred. The authorities placed the blame for the lack of grain on the well-to-do peasants, naming them the '*kulaks*' or 'close-fists'; and endeavoured to create a fierce class-war throughout the villages, between the wealthier and poorer peasants. The means adopted by Lenin was the creation, in all villages, of 'Committees of the Poor,'¹ designed to split the

¹ Decree of June 11, 1918.

unity of the village, and to foster class-hatred. At the same time the well-to-do peasants were disfranchised,¹ in contravention of the laws of the Soviet Constitution. But then, as Mr. Farbman happily says, 'the Bolsheviki looked upon the laws they framed as serving chiefly a propaganda purpose, and in the words of Larin, "never asked how the law was made, provided it served a useful purpose."' ² Power in the villages was now transferred from the Soviets to the new 'Committee of the Poor,' to whom was given power to assess and collect the grain due from the villagers. The device of the 'Committees of the Poor' was clearly a step to civil war; and this the Government frankly admitted. Lenin saw in them instruments for awakening 'in the lower ranks of the peasantry suspicion and hostility towards the upper strata of the rural community.' Trotzky, when accused of thus instigating civil war, replied: 'If the requisitioning of food means civil war between the wealthier peasants and the poor peasants, then long live civil war.'

Again, the theorists of Moscow had reckoned without their peasant. The new Committees, intended as a 'leaven of class-war,' to the amazement of their inventors, united, instead of dividing, the villages. The village, as one man, at once condemned these alien bodies of whom Mr. Farbman gives a vivid description: 'they were

¹ Decree of May 14, 1918.

² M. Farbman, *Bolshevism in Retreat*, p. 221.

composed mainly of outsiders, returning soldiers who had been demoralized by the war, urban labourers who came to the village in search of food and opportunity, hangers-on and slackers in general. These Committees were bitterly hated by the entire village.¹ When they did succeed in efficient action they completely plundered the peasants in their power, and hardly left them enough grain for sowing. The corn thus extorted, moreover, the Committees kept for themselves and the Government got none of it. A peasant described them as 'drawn from the lowest types, cowherds, etc., and beggars just returned from the towns.' Lenin described them as 'strong bulwarks whence the Government could proceed to a more rapid transformation of agriculture on Communistic principles.' Trotsky called them 'shock battalions,' launched against the 'vulture class' of the more prosperous of the country folk. But it was the 'battalions' which got the shock, when faced with the calm, invincible front of the peasantry; and by the end of the year (1918) the theorists of Moscow found it necessary to deprive the much-vaunted 'Committees of the Poor' of their powers.

Food supplies for distribution in the towns were, however, an immediate necessity for the Soviet Government which, by making all individual sources of supply and distribution illegal, had assumed to itself the responsibility of feeding the

¹ M. Farbman, *Bolshevism in Retreat*, p. 222.

urban population. So the Red Army was next called in to the assistance of the Soviet Food Administration. A 'Food Army' was created, said to have numbered 45,000 men, who were medically unfit for service at the front. Detachments numbered 75 men; and each detachment had three machine guns. This army was despatched against the defenceless villages. The shootings and tortures always characteristic of the Soviet Government were now employed to extort grain from the peasant. Sometimes the unhappy producer would be stripped not only of his own minimum requirements, but also of his seed for next year's harvest. It is impossible to conceive of a better recipe for producing famine. Not content with the machine guns and bayonets of the Red Army the Food Commissariat also despatched, during the last six months of 1918, armed workmen's detachments organized by the so-called Trade Unions, to extract the grain from the peasants and also to carry on Communist propaganda. Nothing could illustrate more vividly the mentality of the Moscow Administration than this outpouring of propaganda, supported by machine guns, at a moment when the bread ration at Petrograd and Moscow was causing a panic, and when German troops were plundering the Ukraine. The peasant, intent on saving some little grain for subsistence and for seed, and not the least interested in world revolution, met both the guns of the Food Army and the propaganda and rifles of the

'Trade Union' detachments with an imperturbable front. The men of the Food Army and the Food Police were received in the villages 'with the hatred that attaches to an army of occupation.' Civil war was indeed created, but not the kind of civil war desired by the Soviet Government. In some districts the Soviet Food Commissars were simply exterminated. Everywhere the peasant resorted to a weapon far more effective than machine guns. He turned Lenin's cardinal doctrine, that the basis of all social organization is the struggle for bread, upon Lenin's Government; and he refrained from sowing more grain than he needed for his own subsistence. Brutal force, and extortions, accompanied by the revival of tortures unknown in any civilized countries for hundreds of years, failed ultimately, as they deserved to fail; but not until the peasant had been stripped of everything but the barest necessities of subsistence by a three years' 'Bread War,' which was virtually a fierce civil war between town and country.

A further failure confronted the Soviet Government during these years of the 'Bread War.' This was the effort, following a decree of February 14, 1919, to organize 'Soviet Farms' which were to educate the peasants in advanced agriculture; and were also to make the town and industrial populations independent of the peasants as regards food supplies. These official farms were financed by Government loans, were placed on the choicest land from the sequestrated estates of the landlords,

were provided with the best machinery, horses, and seeds, and were placed under the management of town and industrial workers, and cultivated by the compulsory labour of the local peasants. At the end of 1920 some 4,300 of these Soviet farms had been created. In 1921 the Government was trying to liquidate them, and was even offering them as concessions to foreign contractors. Forced labour on farms 'managed' by suburban Communists did not appeal to the Russian peasant; and the Soviet Government did not venture to conscript peasant labour, wholesale, on to its farms.

Even 45,000 soldiers, with machine guns, cannot coerce seventy million peasants, possessing the tenacious courage of the Russian villager. So, in 1919, Lenin tried a different tactic, by issuing appeals to the people to send grain to the towns as a loan, which the Government would 'repay a hundred times.' This propaganda, 'representing the grain requisition as a loan, was preached all over Russia with an ardour and energy characteristic of the Bolshevik.' Both ardour and energy left the peasant cold. He was too well acquainted with recent Government methods of corn requisition; with the shootings and floggings; the burnings of villages; the driving of men, women, and children into the woods; the burials alive; and with the overflowing *Cheka* prisons, and the blood-soaked *Cheka* back-yards, full of fragments of the bodies of those who had been mutilated

before death. He knew that the Red Terror assumed more terrible forms in the villages even than in the towns. He knew of villages in which every hut was pillaged, the cattle taken, and whole families, including the aged and the children, killed. He knew of the country roads, and of the village streets, lying heaped with peasant corpses, so mutilated as to defy identification, thrown there to serve 'as a warning to others.' He remembered the floggings in the Kostroma Province with whips made of twisted wire which drove clothing right into the wounds; the requisitionary visits, when the Soviet officials made the peasants kneel down that they 'might conceive a proper respect for the Soviet power'—the power of the 'Workers and Peasants' Republic'—before flogging; the driving of a crowd of peasants, in Vologda, into an icy cold barn, where they were told to strip and then beaten with ramrods. He remembered that when the detachment collecting the grain tax arrived in a village of Saratov, not only the grain but also the best-looking village girls were 'requisitioned'; that thousands of peasant families were deported to Siberia; that in the province of Tomsk, in one year, over 5,000 peasants were shot; and in the province of Ufa over 10,000. The Russian peasant was not likely to be willing to make a 'loan' of his wheat, or of any other possession left to him, to the Soviet Government at Moscow.

The ruthless 'iron grip' of Soviet rule, referred to so frequently by the Moscow

administrators,¹ had failed to coerce the peasant by any of the five methods devised during the first three years of Soviet government. The exchange of goods for grain had failed owing to the failure of the Government to deliver the goods. The effort to create class-war by the 'Committees of Poverty' had failed, owing to the whole-hearted unity of the villages. The brutal extortions, massacres, and tortures inflicted by the machine-gun detachments of the Red Army and the armed propaganda detachments sent out from the towns, left the village decimated indeed and in agony, but unshaken in soul. The model 'Soviet Farms,' to be managed by townsmen and cultivated by forced peasant labour, were naturally boycotted. The appeal for loans of grain to enable the most ruthless oppressors the Russian villages had ever known to retain power fell on deaf ears. And during these experiments by the fanatics of the Kremlin, the cultivation of the entire country had, perforce, fallen back to a bare subsistence level. Production had been killed even in the most fertile areas. Still, refusing to learn from the facts staring them in the face, but haunted by the ever-approaching spectre of famine, the Moscow Government refused, as though smitten with blindness, to see that nothing could save either the country or their own necks but a relinquishing of

¹ 'Without the iron Dictatorship of the Communist Party the Soviet Government would not have retained power three weeks, let alone three years.' Zinovieff, Congress of the Third International, 1921.

'Freedom is possible only in bourgeois countries.' Lenin, March 1920.

the Soviet principle of the State Corn Monopoly. In January 1919 the Council of People's Commissars had issued an appeal to the people calling for 'No infringement of the Corn Monopoly! Down with all private buyings! Absolute obedience to all the orders of the Central Authority.' In 1920 they piled compulsion upon compulsion by the scheme, introduced by Ossinsky the Food Commissar, for *compulsory cultivation of the soil*. This culminating folly of attempting to transform the entire area of Russia into one huge State farm, worked by forced labour, amazed even Ossinsky's Communist colleagues. It had a strange effect on the peasant 'delegates' to the Congress of Soviets, carefully chosen as they were. 'We are sick of Committees and you are adding to them,' said one delegate. 'If the Committees were put one on top of the other they would almost reach the sky. They are standing on the rough neck of the toiling peasant, and his legs are tottering and will soon break down.' 'Look at the results of the State monopoly of corn,' said another. 'Our cattle are destroyed, our bread is taken away, our agriculture is ruined,—Government pays 75 roubles for a pood of grain; the peasant pays 10,000 roubles for a hut. How can a peasant continue to work on the land!'

The peasant was now not only lying awake at night. He was delivering most unexpected utterances in Moscow. These were warnings that Lenin's quick ear readily detected. His speech in

favour of Ossinsky's monstrous scheme of universal serfdom was also a lecture on the futility of compulsion. The application of the scheme brought peasant revolts in the south and south-east. The food shortage was acute; and a general famine seemed inevitable. The country was on the verge of a general rising. Even the sailors of the Kronstadt garrison, 'the beauty and pride of the Revolution,' came out in open revolt. Then, in March 1921, Lenin startled his party, and indeed Europe, by the sudden overthrow of the Communist economic faith, and announced a 'retreat' necessary to save the existence of the Soviet Government. He declared the abandonment of requisition of grain by compulsion; the introduction of taxes in kind; and a return to free trading. It was a retreat 'along the whole line'; the Soviet Government had been vanquished by the Russian peasant. The famous New Economic Policy, that reversal of all Communist dogmas, was won for Russia by the sagacity, the heroic endurance, the suffering of her villages. It was a victory won at the cost of hundreds of thousands of peasant lives, and of immeasurable agony. It was a victory so complete that, but for the decimating horror of the great famine of the ensuing year, a famine which involved forty-three millions of men, women, and children, and left thirteen million peasants absolutely destitute, it seems probable that the present rulers in Moscow would have been replaced by a true Soviet

Democratic Government, a Government by the people for the people, in 1921.

But the close of the famine saw the villages, for the moment, utterly exhausted. It was an exhaustion to which the methods of new collection of the taxes in kind contributed, no less than the forcible requisitioning of previous years. One instance of the devastating effect of these taxes on agricultural stock—both crops and beasts—must suffice. This is what occurred on an estate near Moscow. Up to the spring, when the land was confiscated, this estate had supplied food for the family and friends of the owner, and also to a large number of workmen and their families; and had also sent quantities of flax, rye, vegetables, dairy products, cattle, and horses to the markets. When the Soviet orders for the confiscation of the land arrived, the owners were allowed to go on living in one of the cottages. Within twelve months, 'after the cows had spent the winter under Communist care, and the fields had been tilled according to Communist theories,' there was no longer any milk for the children, or for the village, or for sending off to the city; there was no flax; there were only enough rye, oats, and potatoes to feed the farm labourers *for four months*; much of the hay was uncut; and there was neither dairy-produce, grain, vegetables, cattle, nor horses for sale.

Then came a decree of the Soviet Government declaring that taxes must be paid *in kind*.

The villagers on this estate duly got an order to pay the potato tax. 'Any one,' writes an onlooker, 'but a Bolshevik would realize that vegetables should be gathered before frost (in the Russian frosts the thermometer falls to many degrees below zero) sets in; and that potatoes should be harvested in dry weather. But, when we were having heavy frosts at night, the peasants were told to bring their potatoes to a pier where the steamer touched but three times a week . . . the result was hard upon the potatoes, and still harder upon the citizen, who was doomed to eat frozen vegetables all the winter.' Besides the potato tax, the country folk were also compelled to 'pay' in grain, flax, hay, straw, butter, wool, eggs, and meat. *The 'meat tax' was ordered to be paid in the form of the living animal.* This is how it was collected: 'The animals, cows, calves, and sheep, gathered from the entire *volost*, or district, consisting of some 35 scattered villages, were all driven to the district cemetery, the only enclosed place large enough. Some had been driven many miles, and here they had to wait, without food or water, till all were assembled. The little grass to be had in the cemetery was, of course, soon eaten and trampled upon, and there stood that mass of bellowing misery for two or three days. When, at last, they were started on their long march of some twenty-five miles to the city, many little dead calves remained in the cemetery, and other young calves and even cows died on the way.'

A woman who lived near the cemetery, and whose calf had been taken from her, pleaded with the Red Army men in charge of the herd to let her keep her calf and feed it until the last day, but they only laughed at her.'

The country was not only exhausted by expropriations, by executions, by deportations, by famine, and 'taxation in kind.' The 'civil war' which the Soviet Government had created between the villages and the towns had driven the peasant back to the simplest class of crop. Here is the state of agriculture in Russia in 1921: 'The result of this extraordinary battle between a peasantry scattered, and living at a low level of cultural development, and a ruthless Government, which in the interests of the hungry millions in the towns was prepared to go any lengths in securing food, was not, and could not be, anything but disastrous to an agriculture like that of Russia. . . . The country went back to its primitive technique, and became once more an entirely rye-growing and rye-eating nation.¹ . . . In the fight for existence the cotton fields in Turkestan, which used to provide all the Russian mills with raw material, grew rye only; the rich sugar-beet plantations of the Ukraine were laid waste; the tea and tangerine plantations of the Caucasus disappeared.'² Also, the struggle with the Government had, alas, killed the Russian

¹ In 1925 even rye had to be imported; 35 tons of rye were bought by the Moscow Government, early in the year.

² M. Farbman, *After Lenin*, p. 204.

village industries. Formerly, in the district of Yegarievsk, there were 38,000 registered cottage craftsmen; to-day they number 1,000; the cottage workers in the Moscow district are now 690, instead of 32,000; in the district of Bogordsk there are barely 700 left out of 51,000. The loss of the village crafts means, in many districts, the impoverishment of the village, cottage industries having been the chief source of peasant income in these semi-agricultural areas. These were some of the natural results of 'civil war' in an agricultural country which the unnatural minds of the fanatics of Moscow had not anticipated. Soviet Russia had truly become a 'heaving ocean of rye.' One more discerning than Lenin made comment: 'No doubt Russia is now an ocean of rye, but at the bottom of the ocean I can see the fragments of Russian civilization.'¹

Before long the corn-growing areas, which had once exported eleven million tons of corn yearly, were unable to provide bread for the home population; and the whole of Russia had been reduced to the state of a corn-importing country.² Half of the cattle had gone; more than half of the calves; 70 per cent of the sheep; 80 per cent of the pigs. Even more catastrophic was the loss in horses, the number of which was reduced by one-fifth, in a country dependent for local communica-

¹ *Ibid.*

² In 1923 the shortage of grain required for home consumption was about fifteen million tons. In 1925 the Black Sea ports were importing 65,000 tons of flour and grain.

tions on its horse power. The fall in the standard of life of the villages may be measured by the fact that the peasants of White Russia were compelled, in 1923, to live on substitutes for bread, at a time when four million acres of the rich black arable land of the Ukraine were lying uncultivated. And, as regards clothing, a pair of boots cost the cultivator 225,000 roubles, the normal price being 8 roubles; a shirt cost 20,000 as against 2½ roubles, and a pair of trousers 250,000 roubles as against 35. A pound of salt cost 55,000 roubles, as against 2 kopeks.¹ The increasingly successful conflict of the peasants, in such conditions as these, is indeed an epic of valour and endurance.

These conditions, moreover, endured up to 1925, with but little material improvement. In the year 1924 Rykoff, the Prime Minister of the Soviet Government, admitted, during a tour in the Volga districts, that 'all the nation, the whole State is growing poorer . . . the soil is yielding less than it did in the time of the landlords.' Rykoff added that if, since the advent to power of the Soviet Government, the productivity of the soil had declined by 50 per cent, 'the nation's standard of life will sink in proportion. The people will wait two or three years, and will end by saying that the conditions were better when the landlords were there.' When three years were nearly up Zinovieff warned his colleagues in Moscow that the Peasant Parties were a hostile

¹ One hundred kopeks went to the rouble.

power that must be overcome if the Soviet Government was not to be dethroned. In 1924 Zinovieff uttered a preliminary warning: 'We must satisfy the economic requirements of the peasants, or we are lost. . . . If we fail to solve the peasant question, our most brilliant manœuvres in the international arena avail nothing. If we solve it our dictatorship is secure. If we fail we are then beaten on our most vital front.'

The conditions in the summer of 1925 certainly indicated the failure of Moscow to provide adequate sustenance for the peasants. A group of peasants from the province of Oral wrote in the *Biedusta*, the special organ of the peasants: 'There is no bread anywhere . . . and no money to buy it. The land lies waste. No one comes to our help.' Another wrote from the province of Tambov: 'The whole population has been starving since mid-winter; the cattle too have died from starvation, and there is nothing but famine ahead.' Incomplete lists showed 420,000 starving children in the province of Harkov, and 230,000 in the province of Odessa.¹ The province of Kiev was registering a deficiency of 160,000 tons of needed wheat. On the northern shores of the Black Sea cargoes of seed grain had to be converted into flour. In 1928 the total harvest of wheat and rye was 3,500,000 tons less than in 1927²; the Soviet State farms were in a hopeless financial

¹ A Conference, discussing relief measures, advocated allotting the proceeds of a tax on doctors with private practices.

² Official Soviet statistics.

condition; and the peasants were reported to be commencing open hostilities, at the close of the year, against the Soviet Government.¹

When Mr. H. G. Wells obtained his historic interview with Lenin, in 1920, naturally the question of the peasant was discussed. 'At the mention of the peasant,' says Mr. Wells, 'Lenin's head came nearer to mine; his manner became confidential. As if, after all, the peasant *might* overhear.'² The peasant has overheard. He is aware that his present Government has for chief preoccupation an international movement, called by it the World Revolution. He is aware that the seventy-one millions of Russians, which he represents, are a secondary consideration and chiefly matter for food for experiment. 'Those,' wrote Lenin, 'who are engaged in the formidable task of overcoming capitalism must be prepared to try method after method, until they find the one which answers their purpose best.' He is aware that during the international experiments of the last eleven years the people of Russia have been decimated, tortured, driven to the verge of starvation and ruin. He has heard Lenin's declaration: 'The Dictatorship of the Proletariat means a government of Russia by the towns. We do not recognize equality as between the peasant and the worker.'³ He is not afraid of Trotzky's threat, 'if we are driven out we

¹ At the Conference of Agriculturists, Moscow, January 1929.

² H. G. Wells, *Russia in the Shadows*, p. 137.

³ Lenin in an interview with the English Labour Delegate, Dr. Haden Guest, 1920.

shall leave to our successors only ruins and the silence of the cemetery,'¹ for he has been facing ruin and death since 1918. But, while facing ruin and death, he has steadfastly guarded his right to freedom of conscience, his right to maintain his home, his right to personal liberty. He has thrown back the international forces launched against religion by an invincible fidelity to his faith, against which neither persecution, torture, spoliation, nor a raging torrent of propaganda have availed anything. He has thrown back the attack on the right to possess his own children and to educate them after the dictates of his own conscience. He has thrown back the attack on private property by an indomitable tenacity in holding the land given him by the peaceful Revolution of March 1917. He has conquered on the 'economic front' by steadily refusing to grow corn for the uses of the international Soviet Government at Moscow. He has held the gate of democracy for ten years. Is the moment approaching when he will make his victorious sortie, and give back the country of Russia to the Russian people?

¹ *Pravda*, July 13, 1921.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT AND THE PEOPLE

'What cannot happen, happens in Russia.'
Merejtkovski.

THE peasant democracy of Russia is gradually proving itself victorious in the epic conflict of eleven years. It has been a warfare of tenacious endurance. From the first the villages entrenched themselves behind certain definite principles; and, strong in the life-giving power of all true principles, withstood the attacks of the most cruel, unscrupulous, and highly organized international force that the world has known.

Now, it would seem that the period of trench warfare is over; that an advance is becoming possible. It is an advance that will be welcomed by all those who work for peace; since it brings nearer the removal of the greatest existing menace to internal peace within nations, and to external peace between nations. This menace to peace contained in the activities of the Moscow Government has never been concealed by the Ministers and supporters of that Government. The assiduous development of class-war into civil war, in all countries, the 'spreading of the flame of

revolution over the world,' are the tasks which every leader of the Moscow regime, from Lenin downwards, has declared to be of primary urgency. When occupying the position—not of a hunted revolutionary, but of Prime Minister of Russia, Lenin asserted 'Russia must continue to foment revolution in all countries';¹ and by revolution the great proletarian had always in mind armed force, and the tactical strategy of the battlefield. 'Lenin,' said Trotzky, 'was warlike from head to foot; and war cannot be carried on without craft, and stratagem, and deception of the enemy. A victorious war-cunning was a necessary element of Lenin's policy.' Lenin declared that the coming of the Soviet Power 'marks the end of bourgeois democratic parliamentarism, the beginning of a new era for mankind, the era of the proletarian dictatorship';² and he defined this creation of the new era in these words: 'The dictatorship of the proletariat is the fiercest and most merciless war.'³ The theses of the Congress of the Third International, held in Moscow in 1921, laid down the injunction that every economic or political conflict should, wherever possible, be developed into civil war. 'He is the best revolutionary and Communist who draws the sword,' was Zinovieff's war-cry, as President of the Third International, in 1924.⁴ The vision of the international forces, martialled

¹ Lenin, Speech at Moscow, August 1920.

² J. Stalin, *Theory and Practice of Leninism*, p. 59.

³ Lenin, *Left Wing Communism*, p. 10.

⁴ Zinovieff, *Pravda*, October 23, 1924.

by Lenin, for the seizure of 'all power' in Russia in 1917, is finely drawn by Trotzky: 'The territory of earth, inhabited by so-called civilized man, is looked upon as a coherent field of combat on which the separate peoples and classes wage gigantic warfare against each other.'¹

This vision of the whole world as a field of combat, full of warring peoples and classes, is the immediate, though not the ultimate, aim of the rulers in Moscow. It is their guiding red star; their inspiration, and their daily preoccupation. In the light of the international flames they aspire to kindle in all countries—'the flame of the Russian revolution will spread over the world,' says one of their manifestoes—they carry out their tasks of creating the Red Army, of destroying religion and all moral standards, of fomenting, always, hatred between class and class, between man and man.² 'Hatred,' said Lenin, 'is indeed "the beginning of all wisdom"'

As the creators of a new world, without a Heaven, national and local interests seem to them of small value. The formula of their Government is contained in Lenin's famous phrase: 'Even if ninety per cent of the people perish, what matter if the other ten per cent live to see revolution become universal.' It is a formula which just those

¹ Trotzky, *Lenin*, p. 219.

² Lenin, *Left Wing Communism*, p. 61.

'ninety per cent,' having inconveniently refused to perish, are now gradually breaking into fragments.

The principal apostles of the Communist faith deplore the tendency of seventy-one millions of the Russian people to place the peace and security of the family, the village, the province, the nation, before the interests of world revolution and hatred. When the formation of a Peasants' League was first mentioned, Kameneff declaimed against what he called the 'petty opposition,' distracting the Communist Party from things 'of universal importance, including the management of the world revolution.' To the villages the ruin of their production, the debauching of their youth, the reduction of morals to the level, as Mme. Smidovich said, of the Hottentot, and of the standard of living to that, as the Communist, Mr. Bertrand Russell, said, of a Kaffir kraal, seemed matters deserving more immediate attention than the subsidizing and organizing of world revolution. The extent to which the villages have begun to work for a restoration of their own democratic freedom, may be measured by the warning issued by the Soviet Government in January 1924: 'we must paralyse the political activity of the peasantry.' Even in the previous autumn orders were issued for a re-election of the majority of village Soviets, owing to the fact that the Government nominees were being rejected, on all sides. The peasant was beginning to emerge from his trench warfare.

A year later, in January 1925, Kalinin admitted that the peasants were openly declaring that the Government had 'unduly striven to usurp the entire functions of the local Soviets.'¹ During this month a Conference of (selected) Peasant Delegates was held at Moscow, to consider the reorganization of the rural Soviets. Speakers, although selected by Government officials, described the rural elections as farcical; and a speech by a delegate named Issakin justifies Zinovieff's lament on the shrewdness of the man from the land. 'The peasants,' said delegate Issakin, 'say that the Communists are such jugglers that, if they want to, they can force through even the candidature of a horse to membership of a District Executive Committee.'

The demand for a Peasant Party and a Peasant League was growing in strength in these early months of 1925. It was strenuously opposed by such an outspoken supporter of the Soviet Government as Stekloff, in whose opinion an increase of political freedom for the peasant might even lead 'to a temporary victory of the reactionary elements.' Stekloff declared that 'the peasants may be found everywhere agitating against the Soviet Government.' He further gave utterance to the amiable hope that the new law requiring fuller exercise of the neglected right to vote would 'draw out the counter-revolutionary elements, of which there were a great number concealed in

¹ Speech in Moscow, January 5, 1925.

the countryside, inducing them to crawl out of their nooks and crannies.' In order to combat and suppress this movement Stekloff added that it would be 'necessary to sound the very depths of village life'—which is the very thing that a Communist is congenitally unable to do. A further source of disquiet to the Moscow rulers is the growing influence of rural parish committees, which were found to be taking corporate part in the elections, guided by the local clergy. The clergy are disfranchised under Soviet procedure; and this disqualification was the subject of a significant incident recorded of a recent meeting of village voters. The official comment is still more significant. At this meeting the Government representatives were challenged with the double-edged question: 'Why is the parish priest deprived of the right to vote? He has not murdered anyone, nor does he teach his people to steal.' The Government organ, *Pravda*, reporting this incident, is both angry and perturbed: 'Such preposterous language was unheard-of a year ago.' It is language which, if it is heard often enough, will bring restoration to Russia, and peace to Europe. And how deeply the restoration of Russia involves European peace appears incidentally but very clearly from a speech by the 'Strong Man' of the Soviet Government, and its present leader, Stalin, delivered early in 1924 in Moscow. Enumerating the four allies of the Soviet Government, Stalin accords the third place among these allies to

' conflict and war.' The third ally, he says, is ' in the highest degree important ; it is the existence of conflicts and discords among Capitalist States. If these States had not clutched at one another's throats our power would not have survived 1917. I repeat that the existence of conflict and war among our enemies is our great ally.'

The spring of 1925 brought more ominous warnings for the Soviet power. Stalin declared that the peasant problem might bring about the ' collapse of the Soviet Government.' The villagers were actually demanding, as admitted by Kameneff, the right to create Peasant Unions.¹ The villagers pointed out that the town workers had trade unions, and wished to know why the peasants should not have corresponding associations. They even had the audacity to demand freedom of the Press, since the official Soviet Press served the interests of the towns, and the peasants wanted their own newspapers. These were demands, said Kameneff, which the Soviet Government would fight. Was there ever a greater irony than that of the Government of the ' Peasants and Workers' Republic ' fighting the demands of the peasants for the right to form trade unions and the right to a free Press? Once again the inherently international spirit of Moscow appeared, in regard to this developing peasant menace. A counter-attack was launched in the shape of a revolutionary body named the ' Peasant International,' with

¹ Speech at the Moscow Soviet, March 10, 1925.

delegates from the European countries, and from India, Java, China, Japan, and the ' negro colonies.' A revolutionary manifesto was prepared for circulation among the peasants of all countries. The peasants of all countries might very well counter this move by a manifesto assuring their sorely tried and heroic Russian brothers of their active support. That such support may yet be needed, before the people of Russia win back their freedom, appears from a threat delivered by Kameneff to the Congress of the Union of Soviet Republics held in May 1925. If the Communist system was really in danger, the Government, said Kameneff, would plunge its opponents ' into the boiling cauldron of revolution.'

It must be remembered that 80 per cent of the Russian peasantry are now smallholders, cultivating from two to three acres of land per head. Also the position of the peasants has gained greatly in security by the enforced ' retreat ' from pure Communism of the Government in allowing both the renting of land and the employment of hired agricultural labour. It is a peasantry possessing a certain economic independence which is now confronting the power of International revolution. That power is already uneasy. ' The peasant,' Zinovieff warns his colleagues, ' shrewdly regards everything we do.'¹ The peasant also shrewdly regards the things the Moscow Government does not do. In one of those ' blazing indiscretions '

¹ Zinovieff, *Russia's Path to Communism*, 1925, p. 45.

which are the despair of Zinovieff's colleagues he says: 'Till now Soviet (Communist) work in the villages has amounted mainly to the collection of taxes.' A Government that is 'occupied mainly with the collection of taxes' is in a fair way to fulfil the apprehension of that convinced Communist, Mr. Bertrand Russell: 'If the Bolsheviks remain in power it is much to be feared . . . that they will increasingly resemble any other Asiatic government.'¹ Zinovieff points out that democratic elements among the peasants 'are displaying initiative'; and that 'when the villages revive economically they inevitably revive politically.'

The Soviet Commissars are faced with a further danger. The effort to extinguish freedom of democratic action among the town workers has never been entirely successful. Strikes have broken out from time to time, to be hastily suppressed by shootings and sentences of penal servitude. Murmurs have penetrated through the veil that divides 'Soviet' Russia from Europe. And we are told that 'the slightest discontent of the workers is conveyed to the peasantry.'²

It is perhaps too soon to attempt any estimate of these slowly moving forces making for peace

¹ Bertrand Russell, *The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism*, p. 35.

² Zinovieff, *Russia's Path to Communism*, p. 60.

and for individual freedom. The keynote of the movement is individual progress. 'The education of the individual,' writes the 'Peasant Russia Group,' the 'general staff' of the Peasant Parties, 'as the condition and cause of social reform, is the central point in the programme of the Peasant Party.'¹ Here is the authentic voice of democracy. It is the spirit in which a great American defined democracy in the fateful summer of 1914, the summer when Lenin and his colleagues were already preparing to launch the greatest attack upon democratic freedom which the world has ever experienced. The American democrat was thinking thoughts, not of war, but of ordered and progressive peace; and of the means by which human progress might be best promoted. His faith was in the democracy of the West. His ideal coincides closely with that of the Russian peasant standing on the confines of West and East. 'The fundamental article in the creed of the American democracy,' said Walter H. Page, 'is the unchanging and unchangeable resolve that every human being shall have his opportunity for his utmost development—his chance to become and do the best he can. Democracy is not only a system of government, it is a scheme of society.'²

Anglo-Saxon democracy, whether under King or President, is a 'scheme of society' assuring

¹ New Agrarian Programme of the Peasant Russia Group. 1925.

² *Life and Letters of W. H. Page*, Vol. I, p. 191.

individual freedom in religion, in education, in commerce and trade, in personal life. It is a system based on a profound, if sometimes reticent, love of country, a swift alacrity to serve and to defend, if need be, to the uttermost. It is a democracy which has built up, during a thousand years of noble struggle, a Civil Power firmly established for the common good of all. It is such a system of society which the Russian Peasant Party has already conceived, in a programme of the development of the free individual, qualifying each member of the State for creative, productive, defensive, scientific, or administrative work. It is a scheme of society in which the labour of the ploughman, of the miner, of the factory worker, of the transport worker, of the engineer and chemist, is as necessary to the State as that of the teacher, the pathologist, the writer, the artist, the jurist, the Cabinet Minister. It is a scheme of society which does not demand that the great traditions and splendid inheritance of the past should be violently broken up, and thrown out on the scrap-heap. In it the assertion of another great democrat finds place: 'The living are responsible for maintaining the best traditions of the generations who have gone, and for increasing the inheritance of the generations to come.' When the vision of the Peasant Party of Russia, allied with the peoples of her towns and cities, becomes established fact, the people of free England will know how to acclaim the first Ambassador sent to

our shores by the free peoples of Russia, under the national flag of a great nation, now forced to acknowledge the red banner of that International dictatorship which calls itself the Soviet Government.

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