LIFE UNDER THE SOVIETS

LIFE UNDER THE SOVIETS

by

ALEXANDER WICKSTEED

with an introduction by

BEATRICE WEBB

LONDON

JOHN LANE THE BODLEY HEAD LIMITED

To

J.R. AND P.L.

WHO, MORE THAN ANYONE, HAVE HELPED ME
TO ANY UNDERSTANDING OF RUSSIA AND THE RUSSIANS
THAT I MAY POSSESS

Introduction

THE Union of Socialist Soviet Republics has many enemies and few friends. All the other Governments of the world are against it. The newspapers of Europe and America, with insignificant exceptions, denounce it. The learned professions, the established Churches, the vast majority of scientific men and administrative and industrial experts in other countries condemn and deride it. This far-flung hostility may be partly due to the fanatical fervour with which the Soviet Government, or at any rate the "Third International," has sporadically fomented and subsidized, in nearly all the countries of the world, social discontent, disorder and civil war. Unfortunately, for our own self-complacency, it is open to question whether this subversive activity would have arisen if the Allied Governments had not tried, not merely by propaganda but actually by force of arms, to hand back the land from the peasant to the lord, and to replace the

" Dictatorship of the Proletariat " by the old, effete, corrupt and cruel government of Czarism.

But however that may be, there are men and women of goodwill who have risen above this turmoil of abuse and counter-abuse ; and have preserved towards the U.S.S.R. an impartial judgment tempered by beneficence. Among the most notable examples of this better outlook stand, in England, the Baptist Union and the Society of Friends. We may perchance discover in the following pages how came this tie of sympathy between an Atheist Republic, based on the materialist interpretation of history, and these devoted but unpretentious followers of Jesus of Nazareth and his Gospel of Love. For it was as a member of a delegation from the Society of Friends, welcomed by the Soviet Government for relief work during those dark days of war, pestilence and famine that followed on the revolution of October, 1917, that the author of this little book first became acquainted with Soviet Russia. At this point I may be permitted to explain that my only title to preface a study of Russian Communism (about which I have no more knowledge than any other " intelligent woman ") is an enduring respect and affection for the author's father. The late Philip Wicksteed was one of the most distinguished men

of his time ; whether regarded as an eloquent exponent of Dante to popular audiences, as a learned editor of Greek Classics, as a modernist theologian, or, what was more germane to my own career, as an original thinker in Political Economy. Perhaps the most lovable trait in Philip Wicksteed was the combination of intellectual curiosity and appreciation with an all-pervading charity and humility when criticizing persons or institutions that were foreign, or even unsympathetic, to his own outlook on life. This trait I recognize in the survey which his son here affords of *Life under the Soviets*. Mr. Alexander Wicksteed has had an incomparable opportunity of watching this life for the better part of a decade, not as a mere tourist, not even as a professional investigator, but as a normal inhabitant and citizen of Moscow, unconcerned with politics, but taking part, year after year, in the daily work of the Russian people. Further, in his capacity as teacher of English in school and college, he has had a unique chance of observing the effect of the strange new creed of Russian Communism on the life and character of the rising generation of intellectuals.

I wonder whether other readers of this simply worded but vividly realistic account of present-day life in Russia will agree with me in a widely paradoxical conclusion. The

new rulers of Russia, professing a crude scientific materialism, have done more for the soul than for the body! Lenin and his disciples believed that they were going to abolish the poverty of the poor in its worst physical aspect of starvation, overcrowding, sickness and premature death. It was, of course, only to be expected that this great ideal should not be fully attained even by the end of the first decade. But it also seems at least open to doubt whether the people of Russia are as yet better fed, better clothed and more spaciously housed than they were under the Czarist regime.

What is not open to doubt is that they have, peasants as well as town workers, a larger measure of personal freedom and a greater sense of personal dignity. For the first time in history, Mr. Wicksteed tells us "the common man feels that the country belongs to him, and not to a privileged class who are his masters." Further, though the standard of life in respect of physical necessities is still low—lower than in Capitalist countries—the mass of the workers no longer feel that this poverty deprives them of all opportunity of enjoying the higher and better things of life. Music, the drama, art and literature, philosophy and science—all that is rare and distinguished in the world—is to-day in Russia as effectively open to the

unskilled labourer as it is to the highly placed official or busy professional. In Moscow the opera, the theatre, the classical concerts and the popular entertainments are enjoyed not merely by those who can afford to pay for them, but are by a remarkably wise and far-sighted Communism made actually accessible to the workman and his family. In the villages, the cinema, the popular concerts and the lectures are equally open to all without payment. Very elaborate arrangements seem to be made to ensure that the Universities and the technical colleges should not be even predominantly resorted to by those not belonging to the proletariat. It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of a national system of education, in which not reading and writing and craftsmanship alone, but also music and the arts find their place deliberately directed, from the bottom to the top, with the purpose of making, not a chosen few, but the whole people, partakers of all the culture of the age.

I suggest that the underlying principle of this impassioned insistence on social equality, on the spiritual no less than on the material side of life, is the determined separation of power from private wealth and personal luxury. And here we may detect one explanation both of the very imperfect achievements of the first decade in the production of the commodities

by which men live, and of the unexpected sympathy with Soviet Russia manifested by such religious bodies in our own country as the Society of Friends and the Baptist Union. Lenin and his followers have repudiated the "Scale of Values" and the industrial psychology on which the economic organization of Capitalist States is based. This has been well put by a group of American observers in a recent work. "Instead of industrial goods being furnished automatically by the activity of thousands of private individuals hoping to make a profit, as is the theory of America, they are furnished by a deliberate and co-ordinated policy on the part of the State. . . . The Russian experiment is based on the theory that there is more to be gained by co-ordinating industry to a functional plan and so eliminating the waste of the business cycle, duplication of plant facilities, over-exhaustion of natural resources, high-pressure salesmanship and the rest, than can be lost through failure to stimulate individual initiative, animated by the private profit motive." Very naturally, a whole decade has not sufficed to make the nobler motive of public service a complete substitute for pecuniary self-interest. The Communist bureaucracy accepts low salaries, submits to stern discipline, and carries on a perpetual campaign against the chronic

Russian failings of dishonesty, unpunctuality and incessant talk. Soviet Russia is reported to have "already begun to outdistance the Czar," in "fostering economic wellbeing . . . but it cannot yet begin to be compared with the more advanced capitalist nations in the volume of its industrial output." [1]

It is exactly this choice of a Scale of Values, entirely different from that of Capitalism, and this basing of the whole national organization upon the motive of social service that attracts the Society of Friends,[2] as it may well presently attract all who are sincerely Christian. But there is one "stop in the mind" among Western friends of Soviet Russia, which will doubtless be dismissed as "Bourgeois ideology." The Communist oligarchy openly avows the view that the outstanding social advantage of its aim and purpose justifies, not only its uncompromising dictatorship, but also the employment of any amount of force, and even of drastic oppression of individual dissentients, whenever this seems required for success. This rule of conduct has so far been acted on with an amazing ruthlessness which is repugnant

[1] *Soviet Russia in the Second Decade*, edited by Stuart Chase, Robert Dunn and Rexford Guy Tugwell (John Day Company, New York, 1928), pp. 17, 18 and 19.

[2] See for instance *The Challenge of Bolshevism*, by D. F. Buxton (George Allen & Unwin, price 2*s.* 6*d.*).

alike to Western Christianity and Western Democracy.

It is perhaps significant that Mr. Wicksteed (who expressly confines his description to what he has himself seen or experienced) has not come into contact with this suppression of freedom. Indeed, he goes further and gives as the "chief reason" why he likes living in Russia that "Russia is a free country, the only free country that I have ever lived in." This handsome testimony is marred by his definition of freedom. "My idea of a free country," he says, "is one in which you can earn your living otherwise than as a manual labourer, without having to wear a collar and tie, and where you can go to bed and get up when you want to and not when other people think you ought to" (pp. 193-4). This odd definition seems to refer to the absence of a tyrannical family rather than the absence of a despotic government! On this note of slight demur to Mr. Wicksteed's implied conclusion that Russia is a country "fit for heroes to live in" I end this introduction.

BEATRICE WEBB.

Passfield Corner, Liphook.

Author's Preface

IN presenting this attempt to give some impression of what life under the Soviets is really like, I feel impelled to make one remark. I suppose that the one thing that all observers of Russia have had in common, is that they have not been able to see the wood for the trees. This is, indeed, an understatement of the case, for in speaking of Russia we must speak not of woods but of forests. Now anyone who has ever been in a primeval forest knows how disordered it becomes under the slow processes of growth and decay. We must not have before our minds a nice tidy place like the New Forest. If I have conveyed the impression that Russia is tidy I have indeed failed in my object. We must visualize a vast tract of land where the forces of Nature have held unregulated sway through the epochs of time, but where the growth has always dominated the decay. Last year in the Caucasus I walked through a pine forest that many years before had been swept by some terrific storm

and which was almost impassable from the fallen and decaying trees lying in all directions. It was a melancholy but in some ways an inspiring sight, with the young growth slowly repairing the devastation. Now Russia has but recently been swept by no inconsiderable tempest ; how rapid the recovery has been in some ways, I have tried to indicate, but I cannot hope that I have escaped the common error of all who have attempted what I have been trying to do. One thing however I think I can claim, and that is that the trees that have obscured my vision of the Russian forest have not been the dead ones.

A. W.

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LIFE UNDER THE SOVIETS

Chapter I: Moscow Shops

IT is a little startling to come home after living five years in Moscow and find that many people in England are surprised to hear that there are such things as shops in Moscow. One gets so used to the fact that the ordinary mechanism of life is, on the surface, just the same under the Soviet regime as it is anywhere else, that it is a little difficult to realize that people at home expect to hear of an entirely new mechanism.

As soon as you get below the surface you come to very marked differences due both to the fact that Moscow is a Russian town and to the fact that it is a Soviet town. Nevertheless these differences are not immediately apparent. If you want a pound of butter you go to a shop and buy it with money just as you do in England.

Speaking broadly, one can divide the shops in Moscow or any other Russian town into three classes. First, there are the markets where you find an immense number of booths

where private traders sell all the articles of common use. You will find in one place eight or ten booths selling china and glass ; in another perhaps twenty or thirty, selling boots. Over the other side somewhere will be the provision market where all sorts of food may be found. On Sundays you always find a certain number of people selling second-hand articles and curios, but the days when you could pick up bargains are long over. Occasionally you may find something that strikes you as beautiful or quaint at a reasonable price, but anything like rugs or furs you can buy a good deal cheaper and better at Maple's than you can anywhere in Moscow. In the markets you always bargain for everything, and a great many Russian housewives seem to get all or most of their fresh food in the markets, but unless you are a very expert bargainer you will not find that you can buy things cheaper there than in the shops.

Secondly, there are the private shops. These are generally quite small and either specialize in some one thing, such as eggs or fish, or else carry a very miscellaneous stock of what you might term household goods. It is interesting that in Moscow you find shops that almost exactly correspond to the London " Oil and Colourman " ; these are mostly in private hands. Of the private clothing shops I will

speak later, but there is one type of shop that must be mentioned here and that is the shop that demands a high degree of expert knowledge, for example one selling machine and other tools. These seem to be the only ones that are maintaining anything but a very precarious existence against the Government competition. All the others open and close and change their functions with great rapidity, and are certainly steadily decreasing in number, but the last four or five years have produced no particular difference, at all events outwardly, in this type of shop.

Lastly, there are the Co-operatives and Government and Trust shops, the Trust being the official organization of a State Industry. These three are practically indistinguishable, unless you know enough Russian to decipher the legend over the shop front, and are by far the most important retail selling agency at present.

The first trade to be captured by the Co-operatives was, as might be expected, that of grocery and provision dealing. When I first settled in Moscow in the autumn of 1923, there were still a number of private traders in this line, but they have been steadily decreasing both in number and quality and it is very difficult to find them now, though there are still a few small ones in back streets and in the

very few areas in Moscow that are not well supplied with shops.

These Co-operative groceries, in addition to the ordinary stock, make a considerable feature of cooked food. German sausage in great variety from about sevenpence to about two shillings a pound, all without exception flavoured with garlic, and the cheaper sorts, made of a composition that certainly contains very little meat, have a considerable sale. Whenever I have eaten anything under about one and sixpence a pound it has invariably made me ill, but the average Russian appears to find ptomaines a satisfactory dietetic substitute for vitamins. Then there is always a considerable variety of cooked and smoked fish from the cheaper sturgeon breeds at about tenpence a pound to smoked salmon at about two shillings ; these, however, are very much less bought by the general public than the sausage, and in practice are I think only used as a relish to help down the vodka when you entertain your friends. Boiled ham, of excellent quality but only very slightly salted, is sold in considerable quantities at something under two shillings a pound, and is evidently considered a food, like the sausage. Then there is always a great array of things pickled in salt with the addition of herbs, the first place being taken by herrings and other small fish and

Russian cucumbers, which are only four or five inches long. All these shops sell bread in the form of rolls and batons, that is to say bread as consumed at parties, and many have a bread department where they cut the amount you ask for off the enormous Russian loaves weighing ten or twelve pounds each. Russian bread is most extraordinarily good and is made in very great variety. I suppose the fact is that wheat is cheaper in Russia than the various nasty things with which we adulterate our bread in England, but whatever the reason there is no question of its excellent quality. The cheapest rye bread costs, in Moscow, a little less than a penny a pound. Elsewhere in Russia it is cheaper. It is sour, and eaten without butter, as it invariably is by Russians, is not a pleasant food, but it is a real food; you need a remarkably good appetite to get through a couple of pounds in twenty-four hours. At a little over a penny a pound there is a rye bread that they call "sweet"; this by some process in the preparation is given a definitely sweet taste and without losing any of its food qualities is very palatable. Wheat bread starts at about twopence a pound with a greyish close textured "seconds" bread and passes through every conceivable variety up to the finest possible milk bread at about fourpence a pound, a very excellent

bread closely resembling the home-made bread that you used to get in a good farm-house costing about twopence-halfpenny.

In addition to the bakers' department many of the larger Co-operatives have meat and vegetable departments which, to judge by the crowds that you always see in them, must do a considerable trade.

The method of buying things in these shops is distinctly complicated, owing to the fact that honesty is a very rare quality in Russia, and it is therefore necessary to devise elaborate checks in every department of life. First of all you have to get a man to serve you ; this will probably take longer than in England, as he generally has two or three customers to attend to before you, and most of them are buying things in small quantities and considerable variety. When you have made him understand what you want he adds the prices up on an abacus, never in his head, and sometimes gives you a check, but more frequently tells you the total. You then go to the cash-desk, where you will almost always find a queue waiting ; at a busy time of day you will take some time in getting to the desk —just before a holiday perhaps ten or fifteen minutes. You there pay your money and receive a check. The girls in the pay desks seem nearly always to be quick and efficient

and invariably give you the right change. You then either take your check back to the man who served you and get your purchases, or sometimes take it to another counter in the shop where all purchases are distributed ; in the latter case there will nearly always be a further delay. The expenditure of time and trouble are such that if you are only making one or two small purchases you often go to one of the little food kiosks that stand at almost every main street corner. There you can only buy the cheaper sorts of food and are much less sure of the quality. Till quite recently these were all in private hands, but a year or so ago the phenomenon of opening and shutting began to be noticeable and now the big Co-operatives are rapidly taking them over, in many cases apparently taking on the former proprietors to run them and presumably giving them a fixed stock for which they have to account ; at any rate there are none of those irritating checks, you just buy your stuff and pay for it. No goods are ever delivered by a Moscow shop.

Before passing to the subject of clothes a word or two about the dairy shops may be worth while. These all profess to be peasants' Co-operatives and sell sausage and ham and sometimes even tea and tinned food in addition to the usual butter, milk and eggs. Lately

there have been immense queues waiting outside them, butter and eggs having been almost unobtainable in Moscow all through the winter. Whenever the news has gone round that such and such a shop had got in some butter, a queue at once formed soon stretching half-way down the street, and after waiting for, say, two hours to get into the shop you might very likely find it was all gone before your turn came. The full story of this butter crisis would be very interesting if you could ever get it ; here are such fragments as I have been able to piece together. In the first place I was told by a Danish dairy expert I met in the train, who had worked in Russia, that the Russian cows being still in an unsophisticated state produce nine-tenths of their milk in the summer months. This, I should think, is probably a fairly close approximation to the truth. Next I was told on excellent authority some time about the autumn of 1926 that the consumption of butter per head in Moscow had increased to four times the pre-war consumption. Even so it would be very low according to English ideas, and the total urban consumption of butter would not be anything very considerable in a nation where only about ten per cent of the population live in the towns. Now the story is that the peasant is eating his own

butter and eggs, instead of selling them ; if this is true it would of course quite account for the disappearance of butter from the Moscow market. During the economic revival that has been proceeding in Russia at such an amazing pace during the last six or seven years, Moscow has always been well to the front and has therefore been able to command a very large share of anything that was going ; but as soon as the peasant starts consuming any article the demand for it is multiplied by anything up to seventy times, and the quantity that was quite sufficient to supply Moscow comfortably is a mere drop in the bucket of the peasant demand even if only a small proportion of the peasants are as yet effective consumers. All through the winter butter has been obtainable in the markets and private shops at about four or five shillings a pound, that is to say at more than twice the Co-operative prices, but the quantity sold at these prices must have been very small.

Passing now to the question of clothes, the first thing to say is that the prices are enormous and the quality, according to English ideas, extremely bad. Good English cloth is almost unobtainable and may cost anything up to £7 a metre. A suit of ready-made clothes costing £6 or £7 will be of worse quality than one bought in London for fifty

shillings, and though it is possible to buy a suit for about £2 such a suit is made entirely of cotton and the pattern is generally printed on.

The fact is that here we are in the region of manufactured articles, and manufactures are as yet very little developed in the Soviet Union. At the same time as long as they are the only Socialist Government in the world they are determined to make the Union self-sufficing, and manufactured articles are not imported to compete with the very inefficient Russian industries. The consequence is that there is a great dearth of all manufactured articles and those that there are are dear and bad.

The textile industries, indeed, were the first to recover from the general collapse that followed the Civil War and are, I believe, now well above the pre-war standard of production, at any rate in quantity ; but the expansion of the industries has nothing like kept pace with the expanding purchasing power of the population. In 1923 the textile industries could hardly manage to produce cloth cheap enough to be sold, and the textile trusts were giving long credits to private traders in order to dispose of the stuff they were producing. Now they are quite unable to keep the Government shops decently stocked, prices having in the meantime fallen about fifty per cent.

This dearth of stock gives the private trader an opportunity of which he has not been slow to avail himself and you see a considerable number of apparently prosperous private clothing shops, especially in the best shopping quarters of Moscow.

Perhaps a personal experience will best illustrate the function of the private trader in this line. Last summer when I was starting for a holiday in the Caucasus I wanted to get the nearest approach I could to a pair of grey flannel trousers. I went first to the chief Co-operatives and Trust shops, but could find absolutely nothing but very heavy, coarsely woven, black woollen things. I then in despair went to a private shop, where I bought for seventeen shillings a pair of strong grey cotton trousers. These turned out to wear very well, but they faded a good deal in the sun and collected the dust and dirt in a most unpleasant manner. When I got down to the Caucasus I saw a young fellow in an absolutely identical pair, so I asked him where he had got them and what they had cost. He told me that he had got them at the Co-operatives in his market town for eight shillings. The private trader in Moscow had thus been able to make a profit of at least a hundred per cent out of his prescience in knowing that in May there would be plenty of people who

wanted grey trousers and that the Co-operatives would very soon be sold out. Trousers seem to be the most difficult of all things to get, I suppose because even in Moscow there are a large number of people who have not yet adopted European costume and who still wear Russian blouses and trousers. A friend of mine who is an "out-size" adopts the plan of always buying a pair of trousers when he can find a pair big enough for him and generally succeeds in getting summer trousers in the autumn and winter trousers in the spring.

Apparently all Russian women make their own clothes ; at any rate you very seldom see ready-made dresses in the shop windows The shops, almost exclusively Cotton Trust shops, which sell suitable material, are besieged by a perpetual queue ; you will seldom see one of these shops with less than fifty or sixty women waiting outside, and often there will be well over a hundred. On the rare occasions when the queue is absent I imagine it is because the shop is absolutely sold out. The private trader is very much less in evidence in this line, though there are quite a number of private traders in women's accessories.

Russians must spend a much larger proportion of their income on clothes than Englishmen, as the great majority of the people you see are well though simply dressed. Anything

like display in dress is very unusual, even at places like the Opera. To the mere man Russian women's taste in dress appears to be very good if a little vigorous.

Anything like an adequate description of the bookshops entails entering on the question of censorship and State publication and is best treated separately, but certainly one of the things which first strikes the Western visitor is their enormous number. The shops directly run by the State Publishing Department are distributed through Moscow with about the same frequency as Home and Colonial Stores in London, and these form but a small proportion of the whole. The Russians are certainly not only great readers but, books being unbound and extremely cheap, they are also great book-buyers. Here the private trader is almost, if not entirely, confined to the second-hand trade and most of the shops look rather derelict. There is however one such shop run by some very intelligent and friendly Jews which is one of the most flourishing concerns in Moscow. This shop specializes in second-hand foreign books, for which I believe they scour the provinces and they certainly buy with a good deal of judgment. They also do a considerable trade in buying books in Moscow to send to the provinces. Anyhow the shop has that indefinable atmo-

sphere that stamps the satisfactory bookshop all over the world but which is, alas, so rare.

In addition to the regular shops there is, right in the centre of the town, a row of about thirty or forty kiosks, ninety per cent of which are now devoted to books. These deal chiefly in second-hand books and what we should call "remainders"; they are all of them always surrounded by a number of people looking at the books, and if you pause for a moment you will generally see some one actually buying them. The prices range from a few kopeks up to a rouble or so, but few books on these stalls will cost more than fifty kopeks (one shilling).

The other kiosks in this row are either tobacconists or provision dealers with one or two toy kiosks. The town is very plentifully sprinkled with tobacco stalls; at every important tram junction you will find two or three belonging to the different Tobacco Trusts and every here and there a private one, but by far the greater number of Russians buy their cigarettes from the peripatetic street sellers. These are a great feature of the streets and are almost without exception working for the *Mosselprom*, which is the chief of the general Moscow Co-operatives. The capital required for one of these sellers is ten shillings, which I believe includes the

licence if they are working for the *Mossel-prom*, and for this they get a fairly good stock given them, which they replenish from day to day out of the day's takings. Considering the enormous number of these cigarette sellers it is very difficult to believe that there is a decent living in it; you cannot walk fifty yards along any of the main streets without passing one. Also they have to carry a very large stock, as the variety of brands is enormous and new ones appear every week. This is the more strange as there are really only three sorts—those costing $2\frac{3}{4}d.$ for twenty, those costing sixpence and those costing a shilling and upwards. My own palate is not sufficiently delicate to distinguish any difference except in size between even the cheapest and the most expensive. Russians however profess to be able to distinguish quite clearly even between different brands at the same price and get up quite excited discussions as to which is the best. The real purpose of the different brands is, I think, to provide an outlet for the Russian inventiveness in designing new covers nearly all of which are gay and many really artistic, and to minister to the love of change of the Russian public. The kiosks, but not the peripatetics, also sell an extremely low-class smoking mixture at less than a penny an ounce which is made from

a plant which is a close relation of the tobacco plant but with a much coarser leaf and containing a much smaller proportion of nicotine. This is either smoked in a pipe or else rolled into cigarettes. Nowadays you can buy cigarette papers fairly cheaply, but when I first knew Russia it was the usual custom to use newspaper. I have often been told that the great popularity of the Bolshevik propaganda in the Kerensky ranks was chiefly due to this habit of making cigarettes out of any and every kind of paper that they could lay their hands on.

In addition to the tobacco sellers there are a very large number of other street sellers, though the trades they follow are curiously circumscribed. At one place in the very centre of the town you can always find fifteen or twenty Chinamen selling either leather belts or leather portfolios. These last are in universal use amongst all of what one may call the intelligentsia, and are indeed a very excellent invention, as they weigh practically nothing and are capable at a pinch of holding as much as you can conveniently carry. Nearly opposite to the Chinamen you can generally find two or three men selling towels, and just round the corner outside the biggest and best of the universal stores there are a large number of women and young men

selling stockings, socks and the smaller articles of women's underclothing. Near by there is always a little cluster of women who sell sandwiches made of caviare, sausage, ham or cheese. Near the bookstalls already mentioned you always find men selling hot pies which they keep in a small box strapped round their necks which has a little charcoal stove at the bottom.

Farther out from the centre of the town every important corner has one or two women selling rolls, while others sell fruit, mostly apples and oranges, except in the late summer when you get a great variety of excellent fruit. There are also two or three places in Moscow where you find a little collection of women selling fancy pastries. As the licence for street selling costs a good deal and the profits are very meagre, very few of these traders take them out, with the consequence that every now and then you see them flying like the leaves before the wind. If on these occasions you look round carefully you will see in the middle distance a militiaman (i.e. street policeman) from whom they are flying. The first time it happens to you it is rather a startling experience as you turn the corner out of the principal square to be met by a crowd of laughing, chattering Chinamen running as hard as they can, to escape the attentions of the law.

On what principle, if any, these trades are selected seems very hard to understand. Why, for instance, should nobody ever buy a portfolio (which costs about £1) except from a Chinaman in the street, and one particular street at that? The towels are I suppose explained by the neighbouring baths. The rolls are of course explained by the Russian's inveterate habit of forgetting his meals and suddenly finding he is very hungry; he then buys a roll and munches it as he goes on his way.

Private trade has been legal in Russia since the New Economic Policy was introduced in 1921, and in theory there is free competition between the private trader and the Government and Co-operative shops. In practice I gather that the scales are pretty heavily weighted, by taxation and so on, against the private trader. For the first year or so I believe considerable profits could be made, largely on account of the inadequacy of the Government distributive agencies. Now that these are fairly well developed it must be very difficult to make a living. The chief thing that I have noticed is that the private trader has explored the expanding purchasing power of the population, and when he has proved that there is an effective demand the Government or Co-operatives have come in

and driven him out of the market. As an example of the way this works you may take the history of sandals in Moscow. In the spring of 1924 large numbers of people took to wearing sandals which they bought in the markets for about ten shillings ; early in the summer of 1925 I myself came to the conclusion that they were the most sensible wear in hot weather. I found that you could get them at the Moscow Leather Co-operative for nine shillings and went off to the most convenient of their shops to get a pair. There I found a considerable queue waiting, bent on the same errand, and after about fifteen or twenty minutes it suddenly occurred to me that it was a very wasteful expenditure of my time to wait the thirty or forty minutes that would still have been necessary in order to save a few kopeks. I then went across the road to a private shop where I bought an exactly similar pair for ten shillings. In the spring of 1927 I wanted a new pair and got some of distinctly better quality at a small boot Co-operative for eight and threepence. On the whole I have a very strong impression that anyone who is now making any considerable profits out of private trade must either be quite remarkably clever and dishonest or else must be performing some extremely useful service to the community.

One other word must be added, and that is that during the last few years the Co-operatives and Government shops have learnt that it pays to be civil to your customers even if there is no serious competition. Personally I was rather lucky in this matter, as the Co-operative that was most conveniently near to my room happened to have a particularly pleasant set of employees, but till about a year ago my almost invariable experience was that the salesmen in any other shop reduced me to a state of exasperation that made me vow I would never enter the shop again. They were careless and disobliging and took no trouble to find out what you wanted or to get it for you, if it was in the least difficult to do so. The general assumption seemed to be that it was extremely kind of them to sell you anything, and that it was your part to accept whatever they found it most convenient to give you. Now all that is changed and a great deal of trouble is taken to display their wares in an attractive manner and to meet the wishes of their customers in every way. This is particularly interesting, as it is purely the result of experience and is quite unaccompanied by any subservience on the part of the salesman or any assumption that it is a nobler act to buy a thing than to sell it.

Chapter II: The Restaurants

FROM time to time you see articles by occasional visitors which speak of the enormous cost of living in Russia and you generally find that their estimates are largely, if not entirely, based on the price they have paid for meals. One such article I read which actually arrived at an estimate of the cost of living from the price the author had paid for an orange in the dining-car attached to the International Sleeper on the Trans-Siberian Express. It would be about as easy to estimate the cost of living in England from the price of green peas at the Savoy in March.

Now in judging of the cost of things in Russia it is necessary to keep clearly in your mind a very important distinction between two classes of people, which is made not only theoretically according to strict Marxian doctrine but practically by nearly every one you meet. If you are an ordinary citizen you will find, broadly speaking, that life is organized on the assumption that you have not got much

money but enjoy spending what you have. If on the other hand you travel about in International Wagons and stop at the big hotels, life is organized on the assumption, whether you find it out or not, that you have a great deal more money than is good either for you or for society, and that it is the duty of all conscientious members of the Proletariat to lift as much as possible off you by any means not detectably foul. Moreover, whatever may be the case on the general political question, in this matter there is no doubt that the Dictatorship sees eye to eye with the Proletariat.

What happens to you if you fall into the latter class I must leave in the hands of casual visitors to Russia, as I have no first-hand experience ; but for those who wish to know how the ordinary citizen gets his meals the following remarks may be of interest.

I suppose that below a certain level of poverty, all the world over, you do not have regular meals at all, and this class in Moscow seems to go into a baker's shop and buy a pound or even half a pound of black bread which is eaten then and there. My impression is that this class has very materially diminished in numbers during the time that I have known Moscow ; certainly when I have been buying bread myself of late I have seen fewer of

these people in the shop than I used to see three or four years ago.

Coming to the people who have regular meals, you find that there is very much less difference in the character of these meals amongst Russians of different incomes, than amongst different classes of Englishmen. All Russians normally drink tea when they get up in the morning. (Which having said, I am filled with doubt as to whether "normally" is not too strong a word to use in any context with regard to a Russian's eating. However, let it stand.) Then at some time between 1 p.m. and 7 or 8 p.m. he has as large and as solid a meal as he can afford. This consists of an enormous plate of soup and a second dish which varies considerably in character according to the means of the individual. The soup is itself generally rather watery, but is thickened up into what we should almost call a stew with vegetables, generally cabbage but sometimes beetroot, vermicelli, potato or a general mixture including pickled cucumber. Into this is put a piece of meat which is not boiled with the soup but added when the soup is served. I have heard it suggested that this is an extremely sensible way of feeding for a people where the standard of life is low, as the hot soup supplies a quantity of heat to the body which

it would otherwise need a very considerable amount of food to produce, and in this connection it is at least an interesting coincidence that just lately I have noticed a much larger proportion of the public having dinner in a restaurant passing over the soup, and it has become the normal custom for the dining-rooms to give separate prices for the first and second courses, instead of giving one inclusive price for the meal as was the almost invariable practice a year ago. Whether this is another indication of the rise in the standard of life I do not know, but it seems possible that it may be so.

If the ordinary citizen eats anything more that day it will be sausage or something else with his tea in the evening, the Russian evening extending to one or two o'clock the next morning.

The regular worker almost always has his dinner either in the dining-room attached to his place of work, or if he has a wife who is not herself working has it when he comes home in the evening. Most Russians are apparently absolutely indifferent as to when they get their dinner as long as they know they are going to get it some time. A friend of mine used habitually to have his dinner at ten o'clock at night, as that was the most convenient time. As he had nothing at all

before this but tea and perhaps a piece or two of bread it seems a distressing arrangement, but he grew extremely fat on it.

The dinner provided in the Works dining-room for a manual worker costs from fivepence or sixpence upwards. The fivepenny dinner consists of the inevitable soup, but the piece of meat, if present at all, will be very small and very tough, and the second course will generally be a large slab of baked macaroni, boiled millet (i.e. bird seed) or some such dish ; occasionally it will include a small quantity of meat, minced, and fried or baked into a rissole. For about sevenpence or eightpence the same dining-room will provide a superior meal generally with the same soup, but the second course being definitely a meat course. If you eat the whole of either of these meals you will feel more than satisfied, but after the cheaper one you will get hungry again fairly soon.

In the dining-rooms attached to the big Government offices you will find considerably more variety provided ; there will probably be two or even three set meals, at prices from about sevenpence to about one and sixpence and a considerable choice of separate dishes. The cheapest meal will be of much the same character as that in the Works dining-room, but better cooked and served ; the highest

price, probably including some sort of sweet, generally dried fruit stewed.

The actual eating-houses and restaurants are in my opinion much more interesting and are graduated in very fine degrees to suit all purses. The cheapest, patronized largely by drivers and cabmen, are tea-shops. Many of these have a large yard behind them in which the horse can be put during the meal, as no vehicle may be left unattended in the streets. Here you get for twopence a very small teapot with a minute quantity of tea and a very large one full of hot water, which you can renew free of charge. You then pour about half an inch of weak tea into your glass and fill up the glass and the teapot with hot water. This process is continued as long as there is any trace of colour in the resulting mixture, that is to say for six or seven small glasses. As to my vitiated English palate the tea provided has no taste at all even at its strongest, the process seems a little meaningless. As a matter of fact most Russians do not really mind very much whether or not there is any tea in their tea, though they mind very much indeed if there is no sugar.

The meal provided in these tea-shops costs from about sixpence upwards, but the meat course is generally very meagre and badly cooked ; in most of them however you can

get separate dishes of a fairly satisfying character; a good large, but generally very tough steak, costing a little over a shilling. A very considerable portion of the patrons of these tea-rooms, however, bring their own food with them, normally white bread and sausage, and only buy tea. The private trader has almost a monopoly in this line, as the Co-operatives are only just beginning to enter into competition.

Next in ascending order come the beer-shops. Here the Co-operatives are rapidly displacing the private trader, especially in those that do not provide food. Beer is expensive and not very good. In the Co-operative beer-shops which do not provide food a mug containing half a litre (nearly a pint) costs sixpence and a bottle of the same size sevenpence-halfpenny. Where food is provided the mug generally costs at least eightpence, often a shilling. Most Russians however do not drink with their meals and come to these places either for the dinner or to drink beer. The dinner in a small beer-house, Co-operative or private, costs a shilling and consists of the usual soup with a fair-sized portion of meat to follow. There are generally two soups and three meat dishes to choose from. One of the meat dishes is invariably what they call cutlets, but what we should

call rissoles; the second is generally some sort of stew, rather after the German type; and the third a slice of meat; this last being distinctly less in quantity than the other two. Occasionally the choice includes fish. My own experience is that the food is better cooked and more plentiful in the best of the private dining-rooms than in the Co-operatives, though the worst of them are very bad indeed.

All of the restaurants so far described are distinctly dirty according to English ideas, and to even the best of them you have to get fairly thoroughly acclimatized to find them tolerable. A visit to the lavatory is generally an absolute revelation of the depths to which the human race can fall.

These beer-houses are generally open from about ten in the morning till eleven at night, though a few stop open till twelve. Many of them definitely stop the meal at about 8 p.m., and in the others there is not often much left to eat after this time. A few of them provide special dishes from about two shillings upwards as long as they keep open. In the evening they are generally quite full of working men sitting at the tables and drinking beer. This, I believe, is quite a modern development; before the war, I have been told the Russian worker, if he drank at all, drank vodka, but when the war time prohibition was first

relaxed no drink containing more than ten per cent of alcohol was allowed, and they learnt to drink beer. Practically speaking, if a man of moderate means wants to drink in public he must drink beer, as there are no places that sell spirits at a reasonable price. When he wants vodka, that is to say when he wants to get drunk, he buys it by the bottle at one of the Government stores or at a Co-operative. If the store is in a back street he generally drinks it on the spot, but as this is illegal it is not done in the more public parts of the city. This habit however provides an opportunity to set up in business with what must I should think be the smallest capital known to the world. What you do is to invest 2½*d.* in a glass; then you wait outside the shop until a group of workers come along and buy a bottle; to them you offer the glass to drink from; this they prefer as it makes it much easier to share the liquor fairly. In return for this they give you a drink and you very soon get satisfactorily drunk. Thus if you are a simple child of nature, all your wants are supplied until the glass is broken.

Another plan is to take the bottle into a beer-house. This is strictly forbidden and the waiters are supposed to see that the law is enforced; there are however a consider-

able number of places where this practice is freely winked at; I have even seen a customer borrow a corkscrew from the waiter. In other places you retire with your friends to the lavatory and drink it there. There was one rather high-class restaurant that I used to go to where it puzzled me a good deal for some time to find that the lavatory attendant was invariably drunk, however often he was changed. Nowadays most of the restaurants which are sufficiently high-class to provide a lavatory attendant have a spirit licence.

The meaning of these rather curious proceedings is that when a Russian drinks vodka at all he does it with the deliberate intention of getting drunk, and by far the best and cheapest way to do this is to prime yourself with vodka and then drink beer till the desired state of inebriation is reached. Thus round about the 1st and the 15th of the month, when wages are paid, you always find a few groups in the beer-houses who have obviously come well primed and who are in process of getting drunk fairly rapidly. This is rather an unpleasant process to watch as they generally get very noisy and quarrelsome. It provides however an interesting example of the class distinctions which are still observed in Soviet Russia, for very soon after one of their noisy

and interminable arguments starts, one of the protagonists is certain to remark, "*I'm* a working man," then unless the other can reply with plausibility, "So am I," he has lost and may as well retire at once. It is unusual to see a woman in a beer-house, though there are generally a few in the tea-house dining-rooms.

Next in ascending order come the big restaurants. Of these there are perhaps a dozen in Moscow, all of them run by Co-operatives. They are quite clean and the food is well cooked and, allowing for the fact that Russians make abominable waiters, well served. The dinner here, which is strictly confined within the time limit (1–7 p.m.), costs from about one and sixpence to about two and sixpence; they offer considerably more choice within the set meals, of which there are generally two, and in addition a considerable variety of separate dishes from say one and twopence to two shillings. One of the best of these restaurants is attached to the State cookery school. Here you choose your dishes from a long and varied list including a vegetarian and a dietetic section, but you get a small reduction if you take a full dinner. The cheapest meat dish is generally a shilling, but for this they give you about as much as you can eat unless you have quite

an exceptional appetite. The patrons of these restaurants are chiefly the better paid Government officials and their womenkind, Red Army officers and so on.

About 8 p.m. these restaurants completely change their character and become very definitely places of amusement. The prices of the food go up about a hundred per cent, but the portions generally get larger. An orchestra starts playing which, later on, alternates with a cabaret or a gipsy chorus, till about eleven o'clock you find very few people in them, most of those who are there being obviously people who for some reason have failed to get their dinner at the proper time, and who are generally rather upset by the prices they find they have to pay. After eleven when the beer-houses are closed and cheap beer is no longer available, they fill up rapidly. Beer now costs one and sixpence a half-litre, but eighty per cent of the customers drink either spirits or wine.

The first thing that strikes you about the public late at night is that the great majority of them are not habitués but quite obviously people having an evening out, the typical party being either a group of men, in which case they will probably be fairly drunk before the restaurant closes at 2 a.m., or else one or two men with their own or someone else's

womenkind, in which case they will probably not get drunk. This is not because Russia has yet reached the stage of civilization in which it is disgraceful to get drunk in the presence of a woman; if there is any such feeling at all it is certainly post-revolution and is not shared by such relics as remain of the old regime. The Communist Party has set its face very severely against drunkenness and it is certainly a disgrace to a Communist to get drunk. I also remember a rather precise friend of mine expressing regret the first time his younger brother got drunk, but I have seen that same friend quite drunk on two occasions, on both of which there were ladies in the party. I suppose the reason why these mixed parties generally keep sober in the restaurants is that if you want to get drunk you collect a few congenial spirits and all get cheery together. In this case you invariably drink vodka. If on the other hand you are seeking to impress your lady friends with your wealth and generosity you drink wine, or at any rate give them wine, and the whole party is on a different footing.

The fact that the majority of the clientele is having an evening out and wants to spend money is very frankly recognized in the prices charged. For vodka you pay from a hundred to two hundred per cent above the prices in

the shops, and for wine or cognac often as much as three hundred per cent. This is particularly shameless, as all these drinks are absolutely standardized. The vodka is of course a Government monopoly and the wines are all made by three or four big Wine Co-operatives in the South and Turkestan, so that everyone who pays say seven shillings for a bottle of wine knows perfectly well that he could buy the same bottle of the same wine and drink it at home for one and tenpence.

I have said that Russians make abominable waiters, and amidst the mass of controversy over even the simplest facts of Russian conditions I think this statement can stand unchallenged. Except in the very best restaurants they are often dirty, they forget your orders, they add up your bill wrong in the most shameless manner and, perhaps most irritating of all, like all Russians nothing will ever persuade them that there isn't plenty of time. There is, however, one quality that they possess which in my mind covers a multitude of sins and that is the total absence of that sham subservience that you find in all but the very best restaurants outside Russia and France. The Russian waiter may be friendly or he may be surly, but he is always casual and he never insults you by assuming that you demand that he should pretend that he thinks

you are a superior order of being, nor does he, like the tea-shop girls, assume that you are of an inferior one. The French waiter makes you feel that he is practising an art which it is worth the while of an intelligent man to cultivate, and that in his own sphere he is obviously your superior; this is of course delightful, but apart from France one of the first things that strikes you on coming out of Russia is this horrible subservience on the part of those who offer you minor services.

The entertainment provided in the evening varies very considerably. I believe that taxation is very much heavier if music is provided; at any rate the proportion of beer-houses that provide any entertainment has materially diminished in the last year or so. Two or three years ago it was quite the exception to find one that did not provide some sort of music; now it is rather the exception to find one that does. Where music is provided the beer never costs less than a shilling a half-litre. I suppose the beer-drinkers have decided that they prefer cheap beer unaccompanied to dear beer with music. In the old days, and in those beer-houses that still give you an entertainment, the fare is distinctly attractive to the European as it is generally quite Russian. A common form is a balalaika-mandoline band playing mostly inferior music

but playing it extremely well. They always, however, mix in a good deal of the Russian folk music, which is of course very rich. Another form of music is the "Garmonica," a sort of super-accordion, which they make sound like a fair-sized organ. If there is a cabaret it will nearly always include a comic turn between a peasant man and woman, the woman always very fat and generally got up to appear to be with child. A very favourite form for this to take is the singing of alternate topical verses with a "tumty-tumty" chorus. These verses are extremely frank and are very amusing, but demand a considerable knowledge of Russian. This is an old-established form of folk art in Russia and the tune, rather a jolly one, is always the same. Then you generally get some Russian folk dancing which is very well done and is of the step-dancing, double-shuffle order. An almost invariable item is a quite intolerably bad soprano who is nearly always the most applauded performer. There is also, usually, a fat man who calls himself Uncle something, and who provides a comic turn of the old red-nosed music-hall comedian type. This again is always much appreciated, but demands a very complete knowledge of Russian. As far as I am able to judge, it generally appears to me to be rather forced and dreary, but I suppose all

the world over this form of entertainment is provided for those who are nearer twenty than thirty.

In the better restaurants the entertainment always seems to me to be very definitely inferior. The music is generally either a trio or a small orchestra. These, indeed, play very well, but the music is nearly always inferior Western music with often a very inadequate attempt at jazz. After about eleven o'clock this alternates with either a cabaret or a gipsy chorus. The cabaret is pretentious and bad ; a fair baritone and a bad soprano will sing Italian operatic stuff, and very occasionally you get a bass who may be really good. There will also be a peasant man and woman turn, but a good deal westernized except in costume and never singing the topical verses. There is also nearly always a pair of inferior American dancers. I have only seen one performer in this line who was anything like first-class and he, I discovered, was a young Russian who had worked the thing out for himself after watching such Americans as he could see.

The gipsy chorus as practised in Moscow always seems to me the most extraordinary form of entertainment that has ever been evolved. Very few of the members of the troupes are real gipsies ; a good many are, I believe, members of the old aristocracy.

The women, mostly old and almost incredibly ugly, sit in a semicircle, behind are three or four men playing guitars, while the leader stands with his guitar in the centre. They then proceed to make the most appalling noise with their raucous, strident voices, the solos being even more unpleasant than the choruses. The more gipsy they are the worse their voices. The repertoire is extremely limited and you always hear exactly the same songs. One item is a gipsy dance performed by a young woman whose appearance is generally attractive in a seductive sort of way, but the gipsy style of dancing is to my mind ugly to the point of repulsiveness. The men dancers are better, when you get them, as they have a rather amusing way of not only tapping the floor with their feet but slapping their legs and feet with their hands in a way that produces an incredibly rapid patter. There is evidently something in the Russian nature that is entirely absent from mine, for this is quite the most popular form of entertainment, in fact I know of only one place where you can get a meal late at night without the risk of one of these savage tribes descending on you in the middle. I have tried to find out what the attraction is, but failed. I have, however, been told, on excellent authority, that this form of entertainment exactly meets

the case when you are drunk; perhaps this is the explanation.

The changes that have taken place in the dining-rooms and restaurants of Moscow during the last five years are thoroughly typical of the general change that has come over Russia. In the Works dining-rooms the quality of the meal supplied has improved enormously, while the price has gone up fifteen or twenty per cent. Four or five years ago the meals needed liberally supplementing with black bread and were badly cooked and to English ideas not served at all, a tin bowl and a spoon if you were lucky generally being all the implements provided. In the public dining-rooms the change in the meal has not been nearly so marked, but the price has steadily fallen and civility is much more usual from the waiters than it was. In 1923 and 1924 you could hardly get a decent meal for less than two shillings, but the price fell steadily till in 1927 the shilling dinner appeared, and is now quite common. At the other extreme there used to be at least one really expensive restaurant. I was only there once and then only drank a bottle of wine, so I cannot speak of the cooking, but the general style of the place was just that of the expensive restaurant anywhere else and the people there looked just as expensive and bored as they do in a

similar establishment in Berlin, Paris or London. I thought at the time that they seemed to be chiefly foreigners. This place was shut up soon after the rouble was finally stabilized, though how close the connection was between its demise and the cessation of the opportunity to make easy money on the "black" exchange, I do not know. Its disappearance in any case was evidently an indication of the Government's success in curbing the private trader by taxation and other means.

Chapter III: Housing Conditions

THERE is, I suppose, no city in the world where the housing problem is as acute as in Moscow. This is due to a variety of causes. In the first place the population is said to have more than doubled since the beginning of the war, and moreover this increase is largely due to the transference of the Government from Petrograd which, of course, involves a larger demand on the available space than the transfer of private citizens would do. In the second place the general impoverishment of Russia meant that the existing houses were very much more dilapidated than in most places outside the actual war zones, and this apart from the not inconsiderable damage that was done during the weeks' fighting in the streets. Up to about the end of 1924 all the resources that could be diverted to housing were spent on restoring Moscow to what it was before the war, and you still find here and there ruined houses which have not yet been pulled

down. There was a certain amount of building going on before this, but most of it was of the nature of restoration and at any rate there was not enough in amount to affect the situation. By the summer of 1925 many of the local municipalities were making a serious attack on the problem and in addition a number of building Co-operatives had been formed, mostly in connection with Trade Unions, which began building flats for their members. At the present date a considerable amount of building is going on but I imagine it will, owing to the peculiar situation in Moscow, be a long time before the overcrowding is materially diminished.

Not only has Moscow become the political as well as the commercial capital of Russia with the inevitable result of attracting population from the other towns, but Moscow has always led the economic revival that has been taking place in the last five or six years, and this has greatly accentuated that normal " drift to the town " which is a world-wide phenomenon. The only thing that has prevented a very much larger increase in the population is the impossibility of squeezing any more people into the town. The consequence is that as soon as another room is built four or five people flow into it. Nature abhors a vacuum, and to extend the metaphor a little,

the pressure outside Moscow is many times the normal atmospheric pressure, with the result that the internal pressure is distinctly oppressive. As apparently the whole population of the Soviet Union wants to live there, there seems to be no prospect of any material improvement in the housing conditions until they have built a town to hold 140 million people.

Russians always say that Moscow is not a town but a big village, and certainly anything more casual than the way it has grown up it is impossible to imagine. You may find almost in its centre a great block of flats and next door to it a little one-storey wooden house that only differs from that of a well-to-do peasant in being covered with stucco. There is no kind of system in the streets and anywhere behind the houses you may find a great empty space with nothing but a few old sheds in it. I know of one such space in the very centre of the town where an enterprising troup of Pioneers (i.e. Communis Scouts) play football.

Up to the end of last century the predominant type of house was of two or occasionally three storeys, and sometimes these were built of considerable size and contained a large number of flats. It was, I believe, about the beginning of this century that they started

building large blocks of flats five or six storeys high, each containing thirty or forty "quarters" of five or six rooms each, and it is these erections that form the chief feature of the Moscow landscape.

At the Revolution all houses were of course nationalized, but somewhere about 1921 the small houses were returned to their former owners, I suppose because the trouble of administering them was too great. What exactly happens in these small houses now I do not know, but apparently the ambition of most of the owners is to find an American journalist to whom they can let two or three rooms at an exorbitant rent. As the supply of these little strangers is hopelessly inadequate to the demand there must be some other means of using the extra space, but I do not know what it is.

The typical dwelling however is the large collection of flats, often in several blocks surrounding a fair-sized yard. The occupying tenants in these were not turned out, but very soon a system of rationing was introduced under which all space over the allowance per head for the family had to be given up. This allowance has varied a little from time to time, but is now just over nine feet square (not nine square feet) for each person. Russian rooms are almost invariably lofty and reckoned

in air space this works out much better than it would do in England, but even so it is meagre enough, especially when you remember that it is a maximum, not a minimum. I suppose you can find in London or any large town conditions as bad as the worst in Moscow ; but when I say that the housing problem there is the most acute in the world, what I mean is that the best is very little better than the worst. Excluding the quarters of English and Americans, I have only been in two rooms in Moscow that had no bed in them. It would hardly be an exaggeration to say that no one in Moscow is living under proper conditions with regard to housing ; certainly the ideal of twenty-four metres a head, at which the Communists are aiming, is not yet even in sight, the new flats which are designed on this scale being frequently occupied by more than one family.

I cannot imagine anyone but Russians submitting to the conditions that prevail, but in fact they seem to do so fairly cheerfully. This is in my opinion due to two factors very characteristic of the Russians ; in the first place they are great fatalists and have a unique capacity for enduring ills that they consider incurable. This quality may become very irritating to the Englishman as it often leads to the acceptance of evils which appear

to be easily avoidable. For example, the peasant will frequently build his house in a position in which he is flooded out one spring in three or four, and will accept the flood when it comes as the act of God, rebuilding his house on the same spot, ready for the next big flood, instead of establishing himself on higher ground which often lies in the immediate neighbourhood. The other characteristic is that when the average Russian has attained to a very low standard of material comfort he loses interest in that side of life and devotes his energies to something else. Nothing strikes one more on returning to England than the way in which all classes of Englishmen are perpetually pursuing a higher standard of material comfort than that to which they have already attained, and the extent to which the Englishman's notion of prosperity is bound up with purely material things. The contrast is the more striking in that the ideas of the two people as to what constitutes material comfort are so much the same. When a Russian does possess an easy chair it is as comfortable as an English one, not one of those back-breaking atrocities that you find in France or Germany.

It is necessary to insist on this difference of outlook because to give a faithful account of Moscow housing conditions is to describe a state of things that will seem to most English

readers to make life absolutely intolerable, though the people who are actually living under these conditions by no means allow them to embitter existence.

To return then to the actual conditions in the large houses already described in which a very large proportion of the population live, in each of these houses there is a House Committee which is in theory elected by all the inhabitants who possess citizens' rights. This of course excludes all who are engaged in private trade, though not, I believe, doctors engaged exclusively in private practice ; priests are also excluded. The election is in practice more theoretical than real, as what usually happens is that a list is prepared by any Communists who happen to be living in the house, which is submitted to the general meeting and usually adopted *en bloc.* These House Committees have very extensive powers and duties. Where there is a fairly strong Communist element they will generally be comparatively free from corruption, as corruption on the part of a Communist is very severely dealt with by the Party authorities, who are always ready to hear appeals. They may however be very tyrannical, and the fate of those who quarrel with their House Committees is by no means enviable. The three House Committees with which I myself have had to

do have all been of this type, and I cannot speak from personal experience of the sort of corruption that is practised, but according to general report it is only confined to the limits to which Russians will extend the proverb that it is better to endure the ills you have than fly to others that you know not of. As a friend of mine expressed it, " If the House Committee don't steal very much, we let them alone, as another Committee will steal more." I think that these accusations are probably broadly true, for you may expect to find corruption in Russia wherever there are opportunities. Apparently no serious attempt was ever made, before the Revolution, to root it out or even to reduce it within decent limits, and, vigorous as the war carried on by the present regime has been, it is too early yet to expect much in the way of results except in the higher quarters of the administration.

The first duty of the Committee is to collect the rents and out of this fund to keep the house in repair. Rents are fixed according to the floor-space occupied and the income of the tenant ; anyone who is lucky enough to have a room which is anything over his rationed allowance has to pay comparatively heavily for the extra space, but even then rents are very low as all that they are needed for is to keep the house in repair. A student

or a man out of work occupying his legal maximum pays about tenpence a month. From this it rises on a graduated scale, but very few full citizens will pay more than about £2 a head per month for their rooms. With the private trader, or Nepman as he is always called, the situation is entirely different, as he has to make a bargain with the House Committee, the only limit to the terms being that they must agree not to charge him less than fifteen shillings for the floor-space for which the student pays fivepence. As a matter of fact he often gets a better bargain than this as, even at a much lower rent, one or two Nepmen in the house will solve all the Committee's financial troubles. This is especially true where, as is frequently the case, there is central heating. The payment for this is a percentage of the rent, generally about forty per cent, so that the unfortunate Nepman has to pay for the greater part of the heating of the whole house. In the new houses that are being built the accommodation is very much better, the idea being to give each family a separate flat of three or four rooms, and the rents are very much higher and are I believe on a fixed scale, not depending on the income of the tenant; but as I say these flats are often occupied by more than one family, and thus the individual rent is reduced.

The next duty of the Committee is the administration of the laws which ration the space. This of course has been a highly contentious business, involving an enormous amount of litigation ; in fact, special rules have had to be made to prevent it absorbing the entire judicial resources of the Government.

Before the Revolution most of these big houses were occupied by the middle classes, each family having a flat of five or six rooms, the size of the flat generally depending more on the size of the rooms than on the number. When rationing was introduced it became the duty of the House Committee to take away the " superfluous " rooms and give them to other people. This process was naturally resisted by any and every means in the power of the tenants, hence the litigation. As a general rule the " sitting " tenant had fairly free choice as to who should become the new inhabitants in the first instance, but once the room had been given up it came entirely under the administration of the House Committee. When the new tenant had once got the room he began more often than not to introduce his family and relations, there being as far as I know no limit to the number of people who can legally live in a room. As the pressure increased the overcrowding increased until the present state of things was reached. Where

the rooms were large they were frequently subdivided; where this was for structural reasons impracticable and the family inhabiting the room was too small to be entitled to the whole space, it was given a smaller room and a larger family put into the big room. In this way it comes about that with few exceptions these flats have a family in each room; sometimes you find as many as nine families in one flat. You can generally tell at a glance how many families there are in a flat, as there is a list posted on the front door telling you how many times to ring the bell for each family. I often think it must be rather harassing to have a number near the top, so that every time the bell starts ringing you have got to count up to seven, say, before the eighth ring tells you that you need not trouble.

When you realize that while the number of families living in the flat has been multiplied by anything from two to ten, there is still only one kitchen, you will also realize that it is not altogether a simple matter to live at peace with your neighbours. As a matter of fact you don't. I once shared a room for two months with one of my students who was chairman of the Complaints Committee and I have never in my life felt less envy for another man's job. His method was peculiar but generally efficacious. What he did was

to invite them into his room and encourage them to tell him all about it. If you have ever heard a Russian "telling anybody all about it" you will realize what it means to repeat this process eight or ten times a week, but his heroism did not even stop at this point, for he used to supply such a liberal amount of sympathy that they almost invariably dissolved into tears. This was the really efficacious part of the process as having had a good cry they generally went away feeling much better and nothing was heard of the complaint till next time. I always admired the frank way in which he realized that when two women quarrel in a kitchen it is not possible to adjust the dispute by any kind of judicial procedure; all you can hope to do is to smooth things over till the next meal. Luckily Russians only have one meal a day. On the whole, however, one is left with a feeling of amazement that there should be so little quarrelling as there actually is. Russians are extraordinarily tolerant of the shortcomings of their neighbours, even when these shortcomings directly affect their own comfort.

When I first settled in Moscow in the autumn of 1923 the process of reducing the accommodation occupied by the middle classes to the rationed amount was by no means complete, and it was not very difficult to find someone

whose House Committee was insisting that he should give up another of his rooms. It was in this way that I obtained my first room in the flat of a professional man who was extremely pleased to get hold of an Englishman. This was for two reasons: in the first place he hoped that either through ignorance of the law or out of respect for the idea that "an Englishman's word, etc." I should keep to the illegal but profitable, though not exorbitant, bargain that he made with me; his second reason, really more important than the other, was that he had some assurance that although I might at any time introduce a wife into my room I was very unlikely to bring my old grandmother, my wife's father and my married sister with three children to disturb the amenities of his flat by crowding into the said room, and insisting on their legal right to use his kitchen. Up to about the end of 1926 it was still occasionally possible to find a room on this sort of terms, but by that time practically everyone had been reduced to his legal maximum, and it is now quite impossible to find a room anywhere in Moscow on anything like reasonable terms. A few people, such as the owners of small houses, have the right to let rooms, which they do at rents from £6 or £7 a month upwards, and there is a certain amount of selling the right to occupy a room,

mostly illegal, by which you can buy the right to a small room for about £100. However, once you have acquired a legal right to a room it is extremely difficult to turn you out under any conditions. The president of my present House Committee told me that there is at present residing in the house a widow with four children who has paid no rent for nearly two years. They have several times taken the matter into the courts and on each occasion the magistrate has made an order that she must pay, but refused to give them leave to turn her out, on account of her poverty, although non-payment of rent is one of the very few legal grounds for eviction.

I myself have been admitted to the inner circle of Soviet citizenship by having a lawsuit about my room. Of course as a member of the Teachers' Trade Union I enjoy full civic rights, the fact that I still hold a British passport not affecting the question, but I never felt that I was really a full member of the community until I had received the baptism of such a lawsuit. As this has been my only experience of how the Soviet judicial system works in practice, a fairly full account of it may be of interest.

The house I was living in had been, before the Revolution, inhabited by well-to-do intelligentsia with perhaps a sprinkling of business

people. When these were rationed down to their legal maximum or to such excess over it as they could extort, a considerable proletarian element was introduced. I do not think there were many actual manual workers, most of the new inhabitants occupying positions which in any other country would be filled by petty bourgeoisie. However for some time the old inhabitants, led by an extremely wily professional man, managed to keep the House Committee in their own hands. In the spring of 1925 this combination was broken up by rather high-handed action on the part of the local municipality, who practically overrode the election and appointed a Committee more to their liking. During the summer this new Committee prepared a plan by which the available accommodation was more evenly distributed and by which the old inhabitants suffered severe restriction. My room came into this plan, as I had omitted to inform them of my return from a holiday in England, so they supposed that it had been vacant for more than the three months which is allowed in the summer.

The old inhabitants of course took the matter into the courts and I found the proceedings extremely interesting. The case was so complicated, with about twenty rooms under consideration, that the magistrate decided,

after a preliminary hearing in the Peoples' Court, to hold a sitting on the premises. A fair-sized room was prepared by the simple process of putting a red cloth over the Judge's table and arranging a few benches and chairs for the interested parties. About ten o'clock one Sunday morning the Judge arrived with his two assessors, a young man and woman, apparently students, who did not as far as I could see take any real part in the proceedings. He then made a very careful circuit of the house, incidentally thinking that my room was on fire, as I and my witnesses and interpreter had all been smoking in it for over an hour. After this we went into the "court room" and the hearing began.

The old inhabitants were all represented by lawyers, mostly the permanent advocates of their various Unions; I had the man from the Teachers' Union, while the House Committee conducted its own case. The Judge or magistrate was an intelligent and extremely conscientious working man of the skilled mechanic type. Now this was quite typically a case in which you had on one side the intelligentsia and on the other the proletariat, and under these circumstances it is the duty of the Judge to be biassed in favour of the proletariat, just as the Communists accuse the Judges of the rest of the world of being

biassed in favour of the possessing classes. Nothing however impressed me more about the hearing than the fact that the careful and conscientious but uneducated Judge did not stand a chance against the lawyers. In spite of the bias of the court the advantage was very heavily in favour of the intelligentsia. Now my particular case was absolutely invulnerable ; I could prove conclusively, and under the management of my very skilful lawyer even dramatically, that I had actually been living in my room within three months of my departure for England. Also as an intellectual worker I was entitled to extra space which I was not occupying. Before this fact emerged however the Judge had insisted that my landlord should come into the case not as a third party to me, but as a principal, with the result that his lawyer managed to slip him in when the decision was given in my favour and he thus got away with nearly twice the space to which he was really entitled. Personally I was extremely glad that I was not occupying my full amount of space when I discovered in the course of the case that in another part of the house there was a family of five living in a room exactly the same size as mine, though I had always considered mine to be too small for a bed-sitting-room. My lawyer, who like the rest of them was a

man who had got his training before the Revolution, made an extremely clever speech in my favour ; he managed by some means that I did not follow to speak last after a sitting of about nine hours without a break, and started off with a long rigmarole of law which nobody but himself and the other lawyers could understand, and just as we were all wondering if he was ever going to stop he switched over into an eloquent appeal to the Russian sense of hospitality to the stranger within their gates, pointing out that my room was my factory (not, you observe, my laboratory) and that the goods that I was producing could not be exported but must necessarily be consumed for the benefit of the Soviet Union. It seemed to me that this was so effective that my success was distinctly popular even with the proletarian element in the house.

Besides the duties of collecting the rents and settling disputes the House Committee is also responsible for a multiplicity of minor administrative duties, such as police registration and so on. In fact, you may say that whenever you do anything in Russia that brings you in contact with the Government you must be armed with a certificate from your House Committee. For instance, the Stradivarius String Quartet were giving a concert in Kiev and the people there wired an advance to

them under their telegraphic address " Stradivarius Moscow." When Hamburg, the leader of the Quartet, took this to the Post Office the girl pointed out that the order was made out to Stradivarius and that he had signed it Hamburg. Knowing that argument was useless he went off to the Education Department and got a certificate to say that he was the legal representative of the Quartet. Armed with this he returned and once more took his place in the queue. When he reached the window, however, he found that the girl was still afraid of making some mistake and insisted on an explanation as to why Stradivarius himself had not signed the order. Hamburg, at last descending as he thought to her level, said, " But he can't sign it. He's dead." Whereat the queue behind him, by now thoroughly impatient, called out, " Come, come, comrade, if Stradivarius is dead go and get a certificate from the House Committee."

Chapter IV: The Streets

WHEN I first went to live in Moscow I found it quite the most confusing town that I had ever struck, and was much annoyed by being told by people who had lived there some time that it was an exceptionally easy one in which to find one's way about. I have since observed that my experience was by no means isolated. This arises from the peculiar plan on which the town is built. The original town consisted of the Kremlin, a collection of churches and palaces surrounded by a high brick wall. A complete description of the Kremlin would need a book to itself, which I am in no way competent to write, but one cannot omit all mention of this wall. It varies considerably in height, rising in some places, I should judge, to nearly fifty feet, and is surmounted by beautifully proportioned swallow-tail battlements. The bricks themselves are slightly longer and narrower than English bricks, giving an appearance of delicacy and strength when examined in detail; but in

course of time the whole wall has weathered into a variety and richness of colouring which I have never seen equalled elsewhere. I had always been accustomed to consider that a long, straight wall was necessarily ugly, but that of the Kremlin teaches you once for all that it may be a joy for ever. For over four years my daily work took me, at least twice a day, through the Red Square, of which this wall forms one side, and I never passed through it without being refreshed and inspirited by contemplating an object so obviously "right" in every way. But even when you have arrived at this frame of mind it still has a trick in reserve; after a spell of really cold weather, when the temperature rises and the humidity of the atmosphere slightly increases, the wall remains at a lower temperature than the surrounding air, and it is covered with a delicate film of hoar-frost just like the bloom on a grape. If you could be sure of catching it in this state, I should say that this sight alone would be sufficient reward for the toil of a journey across Europe to Moscow.

Towards the end of the sixteenth century Ivan the Terrible added a walled town on one side of the Kremlin, the whole forming an irregular pentagon, almost a triangle, with its base on the river. From this roads radiated out to the neighbouring towns, and as

the city grew up outside the walls it naturally followed these radii. The next stage was to build a wall surrounding the new town at a distance of about a mile from the Kremlin. When the city outgrew these limits, a complete circle of earthworks was constructed, this time crossing the river to include the Tartar settlement that had grown up on the south bank. When these fortifications were demolished the inner circle was planted with trees as boulevards, forming a circuit from the river round the centre of the town and back to the river. The outer circle, except in a few places, was not planted.

Thus it comes that the town is built like a spider's web; the radii and two circles are very clearly marked, but the small streets connecting the radii have no kind of system in them and form a labyrinth of extreme complexity. Any attempt to make your way from one radius to another through these side streets is doomed to failure unless you know them extremely well, for not only do they wind about in a most perplexing way but as no street corner in Moscow is a right angle it is extremely difficult to preserve your sense of direction. As a matter of fact it is generally shorter, as well as simpler, to walk in to the nearest of the two circles, walk round the smaller circumference thus attained and out

along the radius leading to the point you wish to reach. Once you have grasped this principle it is an extremely easy town in which to find your way, but until you have grasped it you find it quite exceptionally confusing, as you can never go straight from one place to another unless the two places happen to lie on the same radius.

The streets themselves are almost without exception narrow and, as they generally follow the old forest tracks, tortuous. This however does not lead to congestion according to London ideas, as the vehicular traffic is so light that there is ample room for it. The case is far otherwise, however, with regard to pedestrian traffic. Very few of the pavements are wide enough for more than two people abreast and the number of people walking about Moscow is very large. Nor is the matter improved by the public manners of the inhabitants, which are abominable. They stop and talk to their friends in the middle of the narrow pavements, they bump into you without the slightest suggestion of an apology and in general behave as if they were walking about the countryside instead of in a crowded town. The problem is further complicated by the street-sellers, who are allowed to encroach on the pavement to any extent, and by the fact that, as a large proportion of

the people in the streets are peasants visiting the town, the variation in the pace at which people walk is very much greater than in most cities. The net result is that, if you are in a hurry, walking about the streets of Moscow is a most exasperating proceeding, though I must admit that if you simply push people out of your way they almost always take it as a perfectly natural and proper proceeding.

If however you have plenty of time these same streets are an unfailing source of interest and amusement. There can be very few towns in the world that present such a variety of types, for you meet representatives of all the Eastern and Western nations that make up the Soviet Union. In the centre of the city a large proportion are clothed in ordinary European dress, as the majority of those working in Government offices and generally intellectual workers have adopted Western fashions. It is, alas, the ambition of every Russian youth to possess "a costume," and there seems to be some danger of the very sensible and comfortable Russian dress dropping out of use, at any rate in the towns. As soon as you get away from the centre however you will find the Russian "blouse" the predominant type. This is a loose shirt worn with a belt outside the trousers. The

modern fashion is to have a turn-down collar, which is very much more comfortable than the high close-fitting one which, however, is still quite common, the only advantage of the latter being that it affords an opportunity for embroidery. The peasant always completes his costume with breeches and high boots, but the Moscow worker often wears trousers, especially in the summer.

Any attempt to give a complete description of the varieties of clothing that you see in the streets of Moscow is quite hopeless. In nothing is the unconventionality of the Russian more in evidence, and almost anything is possible. In the winter practically everyone wears some sort of fur-lined or padded overcoat with a fur collar to turn up over the ears, or else a fur cap covering the ears ; this has the curious effect that the only way to distinguish a man from a woman is by his feet, and when, as is frequently the case, they wear high felt boots, there is no way that I know of. It is in the summer, however, that the Slavonic imagination gets full play. For young men the maximum may be said to be a shirt, a pair of trousers, socks and boots ; you see hardly anyone wearing any sort of coat. Anyone with the least pretensions to being a " knut " will wear his shirt inside his trousers in Western fashion and will either complete

it with a bow-tie or have it wide open at the neck. There is absolute freedom of choice as to the colour of the shirt; a very large-scale tartan is a great favourite and evidently regarded as "stylish"; bright reds and blues are quite common and even canary yellow is not unusual, though quieter colours are, perhaps, more often seen. A young man will not generally wear a white shirt except with white trousers and then it will often be worn outside them. Middle-aged men are much more restrained in the matter of colours, but even they will seldom wear a jacket when the weather is at all warm. The commonest dress for a small boy is a pair of shorts and nothing else at all, whatever his "station in life"; as the weather gets warmer the age up to which this costume is freely adopted increases. In really hot weather, and Moscow can be very hot, you will see plenty of youths of eighteen or twenty so clothed. I have seen a man of thirty or so walking down the street that corresponds to the Strand dressed in this way and having every appearance of being on his way to work. In fact, if legend be true, even this is not the minimum. I say legend because my information on the subject is not first-hand, in fact I have met no one who professed to be an eye-witness of the actual events, but the story that follows

is universally current and I have never heard anyone cast a doubt on its absolute truth. At the end of August or during the first days of September, 1924, a little band of about half a dozen men and women appeared in the streets of Moscow with absolutely nothing on, except that one or two of the women had a sash across their breasts bearing the legend "Away with false shame." Even in Moscow this attracted a good deal of attention, but when they proceeded to get on a tram-car the other passengers protested. The conductor replied to all appeals that as these people had paid their fares it was none of his business. It is interesting to note that I have never heard it suggested that it was one of the many women conductors who had to deal with the case. At last however the protests grew so strong that a militiaman (i.e. street policeman) was called, and after much argument the offenders were removed. The authorities then found themselves in a very awkward position, for it was obvious that public opinion was not educated up to this sort of thing; but at the same time to declare officially that the human form is indecent would be a concession to bourgeois mentality that they were by no means prepared to make. The solution was found by putting up Semashko, the Minister of Health, to say that by September the

weather was too cold for it to be healthy to go about out of doors without clothes. If the story is true, and I have no reason to doubt it, it strikes me as being one of the very few instances I have come across of a lack of intellectual honesty among Russians. It is perhaps necessary to add for English readers that I have never heard anyone suggest or consider the idea that there was any prurient intention on the part of the demonstrators.

To attempt to sum up the situation with regard to dress, I should say that no one delights more than the Russian in nice clothes and the present fashions are such that men as well as women can show their taste and gratify their sartorial instincts at a very small cost. On the other hand, no one ever passes an unfavourable judgment on another on account of his clothes. You can wear absolutely anything you like, and, as long as it is clean, no one will think that is anyone's concern but your own. The only limitation to this that I have ever come across is that certain clothes imply certain things. Shorts, for instance, imply "sport," and when I went about the Caucasus with a grey beard and shorts, it struck many people as distinctly queer. Most people rather stared, though some were obviously pleased ; in fact, I heard one young woman say to her companions as

I passed, " What a ' sympathetic ' old man ! " When we arrived in Suchum, which besides being an important commercial centre is a something of a watering place, I observed that my companions, though by no means conventional, were getting a little restive under the attention I drew to our party. As the weather was extremely hot and sultry I was not prepared to wear the rather heavy pair of flannel trousers which was all that I had with me in that line ; it suddenly occurred to me however to ask my friends whether pyjamas would be better ; and they both at once said that they would be quite all right. Thus it happened that I walked about the sea front in a costume that attracted absolutely no attention. The only trouble was that as the only pyjamas I had with me were flannelette they got dirty very quickly. This time however I am returning to Russia with some cotton ones of a beautiful bright pink, so that I shall be able to present a creditable appearance for as long as I am at all likely to spend in any fashionable resort.

I see that this digression has led us a long way from the streets of Moscow of which no account would be complete that did not deal with the militiaman. When we pass from the London police to the Moscow militiaman the effect is very much that of passing through

the looking-glass, for everything seems to work exactly the opposite way. To mention the most obvious of the many contrasts, the militiamen are almost invariably small men. The point of real importance, however, is that after a time you begin to feel that the militiaman is in reality the servant of the public, and not like the policeman the servant of the possessing classes. I am perfectly aware that this observation on the English police will shock many of my readers, but I make bold to say that six months spent in the East End of London would make them feel that, whether true or not, it is a very natural conclusion to come to from every-day observation. If a man is arrested in Park Lane any spectators will be entirely convinced that they have seen an example of the efficiency of that "splendid body of men" the police; if a man is arrested in the East India Dock Road the crowd that immediately collects will consider that "the Coppers are trying to put it across him." In Moscow when a man is arrested there is invariably a crowd and a long argument in which the crowd freely joins, and the final result seems to me to be determined by a rough consensus of opinion one way or the other, but I have never been able to observe any bias either for or against the militia; the crowd seems to form a quite impartial judgment on

the justice of the case, and if they consider that the man ought to be arrested they will at any rate give the militia their moral support. Nothing strikes one more on coming from the Soviet Union than that in the endless discussion of the "Savidge Case" hardly a reference is made to the fact that its whole history would have been quite different and very much shorter if Sir Leo Money had been a costermonger. I was discussing this question the other day with a solicitor and he told me that it was recognized as a fact that if you want to shake police evidence in England you must brief a barrister. If this is so the police would be more than human if they were not more careful in giving evidence against a person who is likely to employ one, than against one who is not, especially when you remember the extreme difficulty of securing a conviction under English law. The truth is that it makes all the difference in the world to your opinion of the police whether you see them from above or from below, a fact that receives rather amusing confirmation when one who is accustomed to see them from above is suddenly placed in the reverse position. Whatever others may think the victim seldom regards the consequent shock as salutary. I remember being very puzzled one day in Russia when I read in an English paper that

the chief Commissioner of Police had issued a circular that the police were to be polite. The police polite!—and then it suddenly occurred to me that of course the explanation was that sundry misguided policemen had been treating motorists as t ey usually treat breakers of the law. Now I imagine that Russia is the only country in the world in which the great majority of the population have a reasonable chance of having their word taken against that of a policeman in the courts of summary jurisdiction. My own impression is that the revulsion from the pre-revolution position, when the Russian police were, I have been told, quite exceptionally domineering and brutal, has been carried too far, and that just at present the militiaman has rather a bad time and is too liable to rebuke for exceeding his duty, but perhaps under the circumstances this is natural and will presumably adjust itself in time.

I certainly should not say that this results in Moscow being badly policed, especially when you consider the history of the last ten years. For five years after the Revolution imprisonment was impracticable except for a very small number, and the only penalty that could be actually enforced was shooting; this naturally led to most minor offences going unpunished, and indeed it was not till some

time after the Revolution that any police force worthy of the name was organized. There are many amusing tales of this period, during which, to give only one example, owing to the breakdown of transport, it was impossible to buy wood and the whole population were busily engaged in stealing it. One of my pupils told me that he spent a whole winter sitting with his family round a small stove evolving schemes of stealing wood and then going out to put them into practice and thus warming up the family intellect sufficiently for it to evolve another plan. Lawlessness was not however confined to the fuel problem, and it is of this period that the story is told that there was a notice posted in one of the Parks : " Citizens are requested not to throw bombs in the park, especially into the lake, as it kills the fish."

When a more or less efficient police force was organized it had, like everything else in Russia, to be purged of corruption. I remember, during the autumn of 1923, sitting one evening in a beer-house that consisted of two rooms, when a great disturbance started in the other room, culminating in two revolver shots. The police were speedily summoned and two of them departed leading a man at the point of the revolver. These two returned almost immediately with six other companions and

sitting down proceeded to drink thirty-two bottles of beer in an amazingly short time. Whether the money was obtained from the accused, or whether they were blackmailing the proprietor, I did not know ; but I suspected the latter as there was an argument with the waiter and the proprietor was called before they got their beer. From the way they gulped down the beer it was obvious that they were not paying for it themselves. On another occasion I was passing a beer-house where there was a tremendous row going on, when a very excited waiter ran out of the door and started blowing a police whistle. After an interval a militiaman strolled up and the waiter told him that there was a great disturbance going on inside ; to which the militiaman replied, "I don't want a disturbance," and went back to his point-duty.

At this time I should certainly have said that Moscow was very ineffectually policed, and indeed one was constantly hearing of the flats of one's friends being not only burgled but raided, while from all accounts all sorts of brigandage went on in the streets. The nearest I ever got to seeing any of this was one night when, as I was driving in a sledge through a quiet street, a sledge with a magnificent horse dashed passed us at a tremendous rate and my isvoschik said that they must be

brigands. All this lawlessness and corruption on the part of the police are now a thing of the past as far as my observation goes. There was a very marked improvement in the morale of the militia when they were put into uniform on November 7th (the anniversary of the Revolution) 1924; and I have heard of no flats being raided for three or four years. After the amnesty of the tenth anniversary of the Revolution I heard of a good deal of street brigandage, but apparently it did not take the police long to round up their old friends, as it very soon died down again.

Perhaps this is the best place to mention the *Bezprisorni*, that is the lawless waifs that were such a melancholy product of the Revolution and famine and which have bulked so large in the Western press. Until the tenth anniversary these were a common feature of the streets, especially in the centre of the town. It is very difficult to judge the age of such waifs, but they seemed to range between the ages of eight or nine and fifteen or sixteen; they were generally to be seen going about in gangs of from ten to twenty, dressed in unspeakable rags and the great majority of them quite the dirtiest human beings I have ever seen. Many, but by no means all, had definitely degraded faces; all had an independence of bearing that was very startling in

children of their age. The doctor who was in charge of the Home where the drug-taking ones were sent told me that it was very bad form among them to beg and that no self-respecting *Bezprisorni* would do so except in extremity, the correct way of earning your living being robbery ; this they practised so successfully that many of them were able to buy cocaine every day. A lady I know was stopped by them at nine o'clock at night in a not unfrequented street and made to give up a valuable fur coat and her purse ; I myself saw a gang of them running across the theatre square examining a lady's " vanity " bag that they had evidently just snatched. At this time, though everything was done to persuade them to go into the Children's Homes, no compulsion was applied, and I believe that only a small percentage of those going into the Homes remained there permanently. Some, I have heard, would present themselves over and over again and repeatedly run away until they were drafted to the particular Home that they had selected for themselves.

Just before the tenth anniversary the policy was changed, compulsion was applied, they were all rounded up and placed in Homes from which they could not easily escape, and from that time I have seen none in the streets. It is possible that they may have reappeared

since I left Moscow, as they always used to migrate to the south in the winter, and they would not normally have reappeared before the date of my departure. If I find none when I return in September it will be evidence that that particular aspect of the problem has been successfully dealt with. A lady who was in Moscow in June told me that she had had two or three pointed out to her, but if so they were certainly not the genuine article or they would not have needed pointing out. As a matter of fact these *Bezprisorni* were never dealt with by the police; whatever was done amongst them was done by special workers, mostly voluntary. The militia are concerned with the ordinary criminal, while the political offender is dealt with by the G.P.U. (This by the way is pronounced by Russians Gay Pay Oo; I have never heard the form "Ogpu" used except in England.) The methods of securing a conviction in Russia are as repulsive to English ideas as those of any other foreign country that maintains the office of procurator; but in this connection it must be remembered that, as Russia enjoys the privilege of having a Government *all* the members of which have themselves been in prison, their penal system is from the criminological point of view many decades ahead of that of any other country in the world,

unless indeed the Irish Free State has made equal use of her opportunities. The whole idea of punishment in the prisons has been frankly dropped and the aim of reformation is alone pursued. Solitary confinement is unknown. Every prisoner who is willing to work is taught a trade under the conditions which prevail outside, so that he is really equipped for civil life when his sentence is ended. Any work he does is paid for at Trade Union rates, though I do not know when and how he receives the bulk of the money ; some portion of it he can spend in the prison canteen where he can buy tobacco, but not alcoholic drink. If he has a long sentence he is allowed a fortnight's holiday every year to visit his family, and, perhaps most important of all, no kind of stigma will attach to him when his time is finished ; this last, I believe, has always been largely true in Russia.

With regard to political prisoners the case is, of course, different, and it is very much more difficult to find out the truth ; certainly the greatest possible caution must be exercised in accepting any stories about them. I myself should never pay any attention to anything but first-hand evidence which I had the opportunity of sifting, and of this I can offer only two small items. Of the two political prisoners I have known personally, the first was a young

man who, though I believe him to have been innocent of any evil intent, was guilty of an act of folly that would certainly have got him into serious trouble in England during the war. He was sentenced to three years' imprisonment and was sent to the penal settlement in the White Sea, of which such horrible accounts have been circulated. After he had been there a month or two he wrote to his parents asking them to send him his fiddle, and shortly before I left Russia he asked for a shot-gun to be sent, as there was excellent shooting in the neighbourhood. The second was a young woman. As to her offence I have only heard gossip, but shortly after her sentence her mother told me that she had been appointed manager of the Prisoners' Dramatic Society ; she is now happily married to one of her fellow-prisoners and is earning her living by teaching English, of which she has an excellent knowledge.

With regard to those police duties that are not concerned with crime, such as the regulation of traffic, the militiaman cannot compare with his London compeer. His problem is trivial compared with the London policeman's and, though not exactly inefficient, he certainly does not give the impression that he would be efficient under the severe test of having to regulate the traffic of London. In

one respect he has a great advantage in that he has a book of receipts in his pocket and is empowered to collect fines for minor offences on the spot. One of these minor offences is throwing litter about the streets. The Russian cigarette, consisting chiefly of mouthpiece, leaves a much larger and a much less destructible residue than the English one, and this combined with the almost universal habit of chewing sunflower seeds and spitting out the husks made the Moscow streets as I first knew them quite the untidiest I have ever seen. Then in the autumn of 1924 a decree was issued that every house must provide a receptacle (supplied by the Metal Trust) on its own particular bit of pavement, into which all cigarette ends and matches must be thrown; at the same time the chewing of sunflower seeds in the streets was forbidden. The effect was almost magical; the streets became at once, and still remain, more free from litter than anywhere I know and the sellers of sunflower seeds almost disappeared. I have never actually seen anyone fined for throwing rubbish about the streets, and I think it would be very difficult to say whether the fear of a fine was a more powerful motive than the result of the appeal to that civic sense that is such a marked feature of present-day life in Russia. They are extraordinarily humble about what

they consider their lack of " cultivation " and extremely anxious to remedy it, so that an appeal on these lines always meets a very ready response. My impression at the time was that when the populace grasped the idea that it was a good thing to keep the streets free from rubbish they hastened to avail themselves of the opportunity afforded by the " urns," to make them so.

The real opportunity of getting fined occurs over the trams. If you are caught travelling without a ticket, or getting on or off a moving tram, or getting out at the wrong end, you are fined a rouble (two shillings) then and there. If you have not got a rouble on you, you are taken to the nearest police station when, if you can prove that you are in Government service, the fine will be deducted from your next month's pay and you are allowed to go. If you are not so situated you must prove from your documents where you live, and the next day a militiaman will come round and collect three roubles. This reminds me of a singular piece of bad luck that befell me very soon after I had settled in Moscow. I had got on to a tram that was barely moving under the impression that it was the stopping-place and the conductor at once said that I must pay a rouble ; I retreated into my very worst Russian and said that I was an English-

man and didn't understand ; whereupon the man standing next to me said in perfect English, " You must pay a fine of a rouble." By this time, however, the public had taken up my case and protested so vigorously against the conductor's lack of hospitality to the stranger within their gates that he had to drop the point. As a matter of fact it was true that I did not understand *why* I was to be fined.

The tram system is very well planned, if a little complicated ; practically all the trams travel into the centre on one radius and then out again on another. At first this is rather confusing, but when you have mastered the system you find it is possible to travel from almost any point to any other without changing trams. The fares are expensive, the minimum being twopence, and for this you do not go farther than for a penny on a London motor-bus, but in spite of this the number of people travelling on them steadily increases. It would certainly be a very moderate estimate to say that there are four times as many trams running now as there were in 1923 ; a large number of new routes have been opened and the frequency on each route very much increased. They have now reached the point at which it is little or no use to add more cars as the increased congestion would soon

result in a decrease in the number of passengers carried. A few years ago they readjusted the stopping-places so that, wherever there was a junction, each set of trams stopped before it. This materially diminishes the stopping time, as trams do not have to wait for each other, but from the point of view of the passenger it is a great nuisance, as you have to stand at the corner and make a dash for whichever of your alternative trams comes first. They generally stop only for a very short time, so that it is extremely easy to get left behind. All these devices do not suffice to prevent the trams being terribly overcrowded ; at any time of day it is the exception to find a vacant seat and, during the rush hours, it is impossible for any but an expert to find standing room. The tram often arrives at the stopping-place full up to the very step and is then besieged by a crowd shouting, " Move down the car, please." As everyone on the car is already packed so tight that they cannot move at all, this appeal is not very effectual, but by some means or other another half-dozen or so manage to cling on, and the tram departs with them energetically trying to squeeze themselves at least as far as the top step. This is important, as it is illegal to ride on the step, and unless you have managed to obtain a footing on the car itself you are liable to be plucked off by

a militiaman and fined a rouble. I find the best plan to secure a place is to select a not too fat woman of between thirty and forty and stand directly in her path ; she will then push you on to the tram when it comes ; Russian women have nothing whatever to learn from their English sisters in this matter and I am constantly reminded of the man I once heard on a tube train saying to a lady, " Excuse me, madam, but you must go round or over me, you can't go through."

Having obtained a footing, the next thing to do is to work your way to the front, as you are not allowed to get off at the back. This is also a serious undertaking, as the space between the seats is not wide and is generally packed as tight as it will hold. If you are only travelling a short distance the feat often proves impossible and you may very well be carried past your destination wedged immovably in the middle of the car. The wise traveller always begins at once to work his or her way to the front and this causes another complication. The result of everyone wanting to be as far forward as possible is that the front of the car is usually the most crowded, if indeed you can use the word " most " where all is " so much." Now certain people have the privilege of getting in at the front of the car, namely militiamen, cripples, and men or

women carrying babies; the militiamen, except in the coldest weather, usually ride on the front platform, but the cripples and people carrying babies come into the car and nearly always have a seat offered to them. The readjustment necessary to effect this is more than complicated, as the tram is probably already packed so tight that it would be difficult to insert a walking-stick.

As a general rule the public in the trams is quite extraordinarily good-tempered under these very trying circumstances, but every now and then you get into a tram that is simply simmering with irritation and in which everyone is more or less quarrelling with everyone else. I have never been able to observe any particular reason for this, or find out on what occasions it occurs; it generally breaks out quite suddenly and the whole tram is generally at once involved. I suppose the truth is that everyone's temper is, owing to the almost intolerable conditions, very near the breaking-point, and if anyone detonates the whole car goes off like an explosive. One thing however strikes nearly all visitors to Moscow. Anyone in the habit of travelling much in public conveyances in England is painfully familiar with the bad-tempered face of the woman whose life has been such a terrible struggle with bad health and worry that her

nerves have been completely worn out and you feel, as you look at her, that life is a fearful burden to her and to all who have to do with her. It always seems to me that this face is the severest condemnation there could be of our civilization, but it is quite unknown in Russia. This can have little or nothing to do with the Revolution, for that expression can hardly be acquired and certainly cannot be cured in ten years ; it must be a Russian characteristic, and moreover it is confined to the women ; you see plenty of bad-tempered faces amongst the men. What the explanation is I have no idea, but the fact is indisputable ; the only partial exception that I know of being that, as I must admit, some of the women tram-conductors do look as if they had had about enough of it.

Once bad temper invades a tram it seems to stop there ; I only remember once seeing it cured. On this occasion it was directly traceable to the conductress, who was nagging at everyone when there appeared a mildly intoxicated working man. This gave her a chance too good to be missed and she very peremptorily ordered him off. He replied with the utmost politeness, " I ask you as a friend and companion to allow me to ride on your tram." She was however proof against his blandishments and, as he cheerfully but

firmly refused to get off, she started blowing her whistle for a militiaman to remove him. No militiaman appeared, and at last she got off to go in search of one ; at this point the conductor of the trailer, not understanding the delay, rang his bell for the cars to go on and the invader promptly rang the bell of our car in response and we proceeded on our way. At the next stop he invited the public on to the tram, saying, " Come on ! Come on ! this is the day when the Soviet invites everyone to ride without paying," and when the trailer bell rang he again rang the bell that he had made his own. This continued to the delight of the other passengers until we arrived at his destination when, as no one felt competent to act as his substitute, the tram waited till the conductress, who had followed on the next car, caught it up. In justice to the conductress I ought to add that when she understood what had happened she seemed to be as much amused as anyone.

Another way of getting about is by motor-bus ; of these there are some two hundred. As an experiment the Moscow Soviet bought a dozen each from England, Germany and Italy ; it was soon discovered that only the English ones would stand up against the Moscow roads and the Moscow chauffeurs, which is indeed no mean task. In the whole of the

town there is perhaps a couple of miles of asphalt and about the same distance is laid with sets, all the rest of the paving being round cobbles which are laid without any foundation except a bed of sand and soon become very uneven even for cobbles. In addition to the strain from the excessive vibration and bumping caused by the bad paving the bus has to withstand the methods of the half-trained drivers who dash up to the stopping-place at nearly full speed and then jam on the brakes; and very seldom change the gears without your hearing it. Under these severe tests the German buses have largely been put out of action; the Italian ones have been banished to the provinces, but one can "glory in the name of Briton" as one sees the Leylands still merrily bumping and jumping about the streets apparently as good as new. It is however characteristic of the said Briton that though the workmanship is so excellent the design has totally failed to take into account the local conditions; and in their efforts to keep down the width of the vehicle they have entirely ignored the fact that in the winter everyone in Russia wears a very bulky overcoat, with the result that the seats, narrow enough in summer, are hopelessly inadequate for winter; if you sit on the seat next to the gangway you are generally actually touching

the man sitting on the outside of the opposite seat ; and to pass anyone already standing, in your effort to get out at the front, is absolutely impossible. The fares on the buses are slightly higher than on the trams, the minimum being twopence-halfpenny and the length of the stages generally less, but they travel a good deal faster, and, if you are in a hurry, are well worth the difference. The extra fare makes them slightly less crowded than the trams, but they generally have at least what is supposed to be the maximum number of five standing up. If, as is frequently the case, you fail to obtain a seat, paying your fare is by no means a simple process, as it is quite impossible to stand up in them without holding on to something while they bump about the roadway.

There are in Moscow about two hundred taxis, but of these little need be said except that although the Russian's mechanical sense is not yet sufficiently developed to enable him to change his gears properly, it *is* adequate to the problem of making his taximeter over-register. Very soon after they first appeared on the streets I took a certain ride and paid one and twopence for it. On two subsequent occasions I have taken exactly the same ride and on one paid two shillings and on the other two shillings and sevenpence. The driver on

the latter occasion was, I think, an exceptionally able mechanic.

The isvoschiks are such a characteristic feature of the streets that they demand more than a mere mention. Their traditional costume is a very wide and curly brimmed top hat and a deep peacock blue overcoat. The overcoat is still quite common, but the hat is now very seldom seen. The vehicle they drive is in summer a small, and generally very rickety, two-seated victoria, and in winter a still smaller sledge. Small as they are, however, they habitually carry the most surprising loads; the biggest load I have ever taken myself was a small study table, but I got a young Russian, on one occasion, to bring me a bedstead complete with spring mattress and on another a fair-sized wardrobe. A spring mattress, which is a good deal larger than the cab, is indeed a very common sight, for though the Russian will put up with a perfectly impossibly hard bed, almost the first luxury in which he indulges is a spring mattress. As the shops deliver nothing, he must take it home in a cab, which he accordingly does; but this is by no means the limit of what an isvoschik can take; you often see them piled up with baggage to the level of the driver's seat or even higher, the "fare" being perched insecurely on the top I remember thinking one day

when I was still a new-comer that very few Englishmen finding themselves under the necessity of transporting three dead pigs would think of taking a cab.

It is the invariable custom to bargain with these people before you engage them, and as they are experts at this game, unless you know pretty accurately what you ought to pay you will generally pay too much. The best method to pursue is as follows. You go up to the isvoschik and name the place you want to go to, doing your very best to pronounce it well enough to conceal your foreign origin. If you are successful he will name a price about twice that which he is prepared to accept. If you do not succeed, the price will be at least double this. You then make some noise indicating contempt and walk away negligently shouting over your shoulder the price you are prepared to pay. Of course if you are a Russian you tell him quite plainly what you think of him and may even make a contemptuous reference to his mother, but unless your Russian is very good you are safer with inarticulate noises. If he shouts out a smaller price than his original estimate, it generally means that he will come down to your price if you stick to it ; if he does not make the next advance it is no good going back to him, unless you are prepared to pay his original

demand. Having beaten him down to a price that he declares is absolutely ruinous and taking the bread out of his children's mouths and so on, you take your seat feeling that relations are a little strained, but far from bearing any malice he will probably at once enter into a cheerful conversation. It is true that if you have up to this point by any chance managed to conceal the fact that you are a foreigner he will show distinct displeasure when you give yourself away, but he will very soon get over this and carry on cheerfully until you pay him, when he may think it worth while to have another try, a thing he would never dream of doing with a native.

Chapter V: The Railways

THERE is nothing in which I have seen such great changes during the time that I have known Russia as in the railways. I remember, as I travelled towards that country in May, 1922, reading a report of two American engineers, definitely stating that it was impossible for the Russian railways to continue working at all for more than another month, and by the time I had arrived at my destination I had come to the conclusion that the statement was little if at all exaggerated. The journey from Riga to Moscow was more or less normal, but this was partly in Latvia, and the part in Russia was the most efficient line in the country, as the American Relief Administration and other organizations were bringing in all their supplies for the relief of the famine through Riga. It was after I left Moscow to travel down to the Volga valley that I began to see the signs of collapse. As you neared each large station you saw miles and miles of derelict waggons and engines in

every stage of decay ; in one place I counted over a hundred broken-down engines as we crawled slowly past them. The journey from Moscow to Buzuluk in the Samara district was about seven hundred miles, and I broke all records for the relief unit I was joining by taking only five days to accomplish it. The next time I took this journey was in February, 1923, when it took three full days ; now the trains are scheduled for thirty-six hours and like all Russian trains are almost invariably punctual.

In those days travel was indeed a leisurely proceeding. The train seldom stopped for less than half an hour even at a wayside station, and at any considerable town it stopped for at least an hour, often two. In addition to this, which was "according to plan" though I never heard of any time-tables in those days, there was always an excellent chance of the engine breaking down. This adventure never happened to me myself, for as a matter of fact, *pace* the American engineers, the railways were already on the up grade when I arrived in Russia, but it was still a common experience, and a month or two earlier had been an ordinary one. Two of the Quakers returning to Moscow a few weeks before were held up at a small station for nearly two days while the harassed station-

master searched the line by telephone and telegraph for a practicable engine. The reason why the station-master was harassed by such an ordinary occurrence as the breakdown of an engine was presumably that he mistook the Quaker six-pointed badge for the Soviet five-pointed star. Instead of dealing with a crowd of miscellaneous Russians and two entirely pacifist ladies, he imagined that a cruel fate had deposited at his station two very highly placed Communist " comrades " and probably thought that he ran a serious risk of being shot if he did not soon move them on at any rate to the next station, whereas, if he had only known, the only risk he took was that of being converted. Luckily for them they knew no Russian and could only smile and point to their badges. Finally he produced an engine with a portrait of Karl Marx on one side and of Lenin on the other, and they went on their way and he saw them no more. The combination was apparently a powerful one, as they arrived in Moscow without further mishap, though whether this was due to the passive efficiency of the Quaker or the somewhat more militant methods of Marx and Lenin I am not prepared to say.

There are always two ways of regarding railway travel, and the difference was particularly strongly marked at that time. If you

regarded it as a means of transit from one piece of your life to the next, it was quite exceptionally exasperating ; if you regarded it as a piece of life itself, it was a particularly interesting and amusing one. On the occasion of my first journey I had, as a famine relief worker, a free pass from the Government and travelled in one of the old International Car Company's sleepers. Thus I missed much of the interest. My companion was an American going down to Orenberg on a similar errand to my own, a very pleasant fellow, but not what I had come to Russia to see. However, as we spent much more time in waiting by the wayside than in actually travelling, we managed not to bore each other seriously. The train stopped constantly and generally for long periods. Wherever it stopped, even at the smallest station, the place was teeming with life, the local inhabitants evidently enjoying the great event of the day, the arrival of the train. When it proceeded on its leisurely way it was, for the greater part of the time, passing through forests largely consisting of birch trees which in May were just bursting into leaf. In one such forest we stopped just where a little stream was meandering through it, apparently for the sole purpose of allowing the passengers to get out and gather the spring flowers, for after about half an hour the engine

blew its whistle and we proceeded on our way, with every compartment full of flowers, and the engine and most of the carriages decorated with the young branches of the birch trees. As we drew near the famine district the journey grew less pleasant, though hardly less interesting, for all the derelict waggons were filled with refugees from the "hunger land." These people were not actually starving, for the real famine was over with the coming of the spring, but they were obviously living in the very depths of poverty, and up to that time I had never in my life seen anyone as dirty as most of them were, though according to English ideas their clothing was sufficient, if ragged. As we passed into the famine district itself these crowds of refugees did not diminish, for even at the worst, there had always been a certain amount of food along the railways.

The next considerable railway journey I took was in February, 1923, when I travelled up to Moscow and back. This time I travelled third class, and as I could then use a few words of Russian, I found it very much more amusing. It is surprising with what a small vocabulary you can carry on a conversation when you are travelling in a train that is averaging ten miles an hour. I do not think that anything frees you so absolutely from the

But the most striking contrast was when, as happened several times, a private soldier got into the train and they quite naturally entered into conversation without any suggestion of respect or condescension. This was the first example that came to my notice of the fact that in the Red Army, although on parade discipline is extremely strict, off parade all ranks are equal. I was particularly pleased that on the last day of my journey, when one of the "Commercial Travellers" offered me some caviare I was able by the exercise of a little diplomacy to get him to give some caviare to the General.

I have referred to the difficulty of getting a ticket; this is always a complicated matter in Russia, but at this time it was for the ordinary individual almost an impossibility. I heard of one woman who as late as 1924 spent every night for a month queued up at the booking office, before she could get one. The complication arises from the fact that on all the long-distance trains they will not sell you a ticket unless there is a place for you. As a "place" means the whole of one seat, or the corresponding space above, only a comparatively small number of people can get on to a train; but once you have obtained a ticket it makes travelling extremely comfortable. Nowadays there is a properly organized system

of town booking offices where you can get tickets in advance, so that though the ticket you get may be for as long as a week ahead one visit to the booking office will normally secure you a ticket, although in the holiday season you will very likely have to wait for several hours in the queue to make sure of getting one. Even at wayside stations, there is some system of rationing " places " so that you can book in advance. In 1923, however, there was no such system and no tickets were sold until the train came into the station and the guard informed the booking clerk what places there were vacant. The booking clerk then proceeded to sell tickets as fast as he could, but this was not very fast as each ticket had to be written out on an elaborate form ; then the " place card " had to be made out in the same way and finally an elaborate calculation gone through to find out how many millions of the depreciated roubles were, on the day's exchange, equivalent to the fare. Even now it takes, on the average, about five minutes to sell a railway ticket, and in those days it was only at the most important stations that more than two or three could be sold before the train went on its way.

Another expression that needs a little explanation is " third class." The real distinction is between " hard " and " soft " places. " Soft "

places may be in International Waggon which is attached to the best trains, in which case they cost more than twice as much as the "hard" places, or they may be ordinary "soft" places, in which case they cost nearly twice as much. Very few people travel "International" except highly placed officials on Government business, foreigners and the most prosperous Nepmen. The ordinary official travelling on business or making use of the yearly pass, to which he is probably entitled, travels "soft" with the rest of the Nepmen and a few well-paid officials who are paying their own fare. All ordinary people travel "hard," and to my mind this is by far the pleasantest way to travel. The hardship is very slight, as you can either take your own bedding, which is what most Russians do, or you can hire a mattress, etc., on the train. As the Russian railways are wide gauge and you get the whole seat to yourself you can make yourself extremely comfortable, even in a "hard" place. The back of the seat lifts up to form the upper berth, while there is a very roomy luggage rack, that can also be used as a berth, on the third floor. Most of the carriages are divided into three large compartments, but a few are divided up into coupés on the English system.

In the "hard" carriages you will always

find your fellow-travellers sociable. At first this is a little embarrassing, as the conversational opening, with a foreigner particularly, is to put him through a very thorough cross-examination as to his origin, business, age and income, then passing to his opinion of Russia and so to general conversation. Personally I always refuse to tell people my income, but this is the only item of British reticence that I now retain, for I very soon learnt that it is not idle curiosity but friendly interest that inspires the questions. You assume in Russia that the people you are going to spend two or three days with are worth knowing, and proceed at once to get to know them ; if you find them uninteresting you drop them and try someone else, but there is none of that preliminary distrust which generally makes English railway journeys so dull.

With regard to food there are three alternatives. A few of the best through trains carry a restaurant car ; the food in these is good but rather expensive, twenty or thirty per cent above restaurant prices, and if you want anything outside the regular bill of fare, such as fruit or wine, the prices are very high. These cars are only used by foreigners and Nepmen, and even the travelling official will seldom go into them. The second and usual method is to get your dinner in the refresh-

ment room at some large station. The trains always stop for half an hour for this purpose, two or three times a day. Here you get an excellent dinner of the type I have mentioned in describing the restaurants. The prices are about the same as in a good beer-house, the places clean and the food well cooked. The service as usual is bad, and you always think that you are not going to get your dinner before the train goes on, but as a matter of fact you do.

By far the most amusing plan, however, is to avail yourself of the ample facilities provided for picnicking in the carriage. At every considerable station there is a small boiler house that provides boiling water. No Russian ever travels anywhere without a kettle. As soon as the train stops at the station every carriage pours out its inhabitants, who race up the platform to get a good place in the queue. A few even of the swells in the "soft" carriages will join with the vulgar herd in this competition. Having obtained your hot water, you take it back to your carriage and make tea. For food you depend on the peasant women who meet every train passing through their station with the local products. These vary considerably from place to place. Rolls and bread and boiled, or rather baked, milk are always plentiful, butter

occasionally, and nearly always some sort of local cheese, generally of the " cream " variety. Hot meat pies of some sort are nearly always in evidence, roast chickens occasionally. Now that the trains are punctual, you nearly always find some sort of hot meat, pork chops for instance. These always look to me rather repulsive, and carried back to your carriage in your fingers or wrapped in a rather dubious piece of newspaper do not add to the social amenities. In season you always find a plentiful supply of fruit of all varieties ; some of the best melons I have ever eaten in my life have been bought for next to nothing in this way. If there is any local delicacy it will be obtainable from these women ; in the south, for instance, you will find stations where you can buy crayfish for about fivepence a dozen, while any place within reach of the Caspian will provide you with caviare at two or three shillings a pound.

Of course all these things must be bargained for, and prices fall very rapidly as the time of departure draws near. Warning of this is given by the ringing of the station bell ; two minutes before the time it is rung twice and the passengers hurry back to their carriages, and just before the train leaves it rings three times, but as the trains are very heavy and start slowly an active man can often complete

his bargain after the last bell and still run after and catch the train ; an adept at this practice will obtain his supplies for about half what other people pay. At the larger stations sellers are not allowed within the precincts of the railway and are often to be found in a little market a minute or so from the station. At the smaller stations they often come along the train itself and your final bargaining can be conducted from the carriage step. When the train is under way again you settle down and consume your supplies. Shortly after leaving the station some improvident or unusually thirsty individual will probably come along and if you have a big kettle ask you if you have any hot water to spare. I always carry a small tea infuser and in the old days after I had made my tea I often passed it round to most of the rest of the compartment, and thus provided them with the slight colouring that they deem necessary ; nowadays nearly everyone has their own tea and this method of becoming a public benefactor is no longer open. At the holiday season you can generally find a student or two who have to be content with hot water, for as all students receive free passes to their homes at the end of term, many of them travel in a state of great impecuniosity ; happily in Russia it is hardly ever taken as an insult if you offer

of your abundance to one less affluent than yourself.

During the summer all the windows on one side of the carriage are kept open till nightfall, so that the air is fresh, and though this means a good deal of dust and dirt in the carriages you do not get the peculiarly unpleasant grit of an English train as all the engines burn either wood or oil. In the winter, on the other hand, the carriages are hermetically sealed, any surreptitious attempt to introduce a breath of fresh air by leaving the door open being met with instantaneous and violent protests, and the atmosphere speedily becoming quite indescribable. In really cold weather this does not so much matter as a few minutes or even seconds in the fresh air at a station revives you in a remarkable way, but if it is only just freezing a long journey may become very trying.

One nuisance you are almost entirely spared, and that is the nuisance of children ; not that there are no children, there are always plenty, but for some reason they are hardly ever a nuisance. Why Russian babies do not cry in public I cannot profess to understand, but my theory as to the older children is that as they are hardly ever repressed by their elders they are natural and friendly to, but not much interested in, grown-ups. The only thing

approaching to a public rebuke that I remember to have heard was a woman who said to her very mildly obstreperous small boy, "Now, sonnie, remember that you're not at home," to which he replied, "No, if I was at home I should be making much more noise than this." However, having let off a little steam he very soon quietened down again.

The trains are slow; with the exception of one or two between Moscow and Leningrad which travel at about sixty miles an hour, they seldom exceed thirty; the permanent way is of course very rough according to English ideas, but as the coaches are very large and heavy they do not shake you about very much; I suppose the broad gauge also helps to steady them. The fares are extremely low; you can travel from Moscow to Tiflis for less than it costs to go from London to Aberdeen; and I was told last summer that the fare from Moscow to Vladivostok was just over £8. This is the more remarkable in that since 1921 the railways have been self-supporting, and a very large part of the expense of reconstruction was provided from their own resources. The only subsidy that I know of their receiving was that, when the rouble was finally stabilized they were allowed to issue the first ten shilling notes, the smallest denom-

ination of the State Bank notes being the Chervonits, which is just over £1. There was as far as I know no special backing to these notes beyond the public desire for a stable currency, but the railways obtained a very considerable sum of money for the year in which they were in circulation.

It is always necessary to close the windows at night, as the railways are infested with thieves who snatch things through the windows and disappear as if by magic. A friend of mine even lost his coat when the window was shut, the thief thumping the window from outside in such a way that it opened and though my friend heard the window falling the thief got his coat before he could. Another plan is to get on the roof of the carriage and fish for things with a line and hook. Personally I have never seen any of these things, and I only repeat common report. Soon after my arrival in Russia I was told that if you tie your things down so that they cannot be snatched you are fairly safe and I have always adopted this practice ; whether this is the reason I have never lost anything or whether it has been just luck I do not know, but I certainly know plenty of people who have been robbed. Four or five years ago there were a lot of tales of trains being held up, but I have not heard any recently. At the stations, on arrival and

departure, you have to be very careful; a young missionary I met, travelling home from China, had his despatch case containing his passport, money and papers snatched out of his hand at the Moscow terminus and never saw them again.

The Moscow stations with one exception are pre-war, the exception being the "Kazan" station which was begun before the war and completed about two years ago. It is a very interesting piece of architecture as it embodies the styles of all the regions through which the railway passes. The general effect is distinctly good. Just opposite it is the terminus of the Trans-Siberian railway, a building in a delightfully fantastic style reminding you of nothing so much as a barn in a Dürer etching, or an illustration to a Russian fairy story.

Inside the railway stations you always find a great crowd of people, for the Russian, knowing that the trains are punctual and that he is not always so, makes sure by arriving hours or even days before the train goes. Outside Moscow a large part of the floor space is always covered with people sleeping on their baggage and sometimes it is quite difficult to make your way about the station. Even in a country station, where there is only one train a day, you will find people sleeping

all over the place immediately after the departure of the train. Nowadays it is apparently forbidden in the Moscow stations, unless they have set apart special places as dormitories, for you never see them in this state.

There is one feature of the Russian railways that needs a special mention. As you travel along in the summer you see at intervals, all along the track, large piles of light hurdles, which you are told are to keep the snow off the rails in the winter, but they look very ineffective for this purpose, as they are quite open between the slats. As a matter of fact they do not stop the snow at all, but produce an eddy in the wind so that the snow falls on the inner side of them ; if there is no wind there is no danger of drifts. Once the snow has formed a ridge it acts automatically and piles up on the windward side till the hurdles disappear under it. I have at times seen these ridges as much as fifteen or twenty feet high and of great thickness. In addition to this they have a very efficient system of steam snow-ploughs to clear the line in case of stoppage, but occasionally they get a blizzard from which nothing can protect the track and the trains stop running. It is generally only a matter of hours after the storm stops before they get the line cleared ; but these storms may occasionally last for a couple of days, so

that you can never be quite certain in the winter when you will get to your destination. Nowadays it rarely or never happens that a train gets trapped. The line is very well patrolled, and if it is unlikely that the train can get through to the next station it is held up in the shelter of the preceding one. Some years ago this was not the case and there were many accidents of this sort ; in one case a train was trapped on the highlands of the Kirgiz steppes and nearly a thousand people frozen to death before they could be dug out three weeks later.

Another difficulty that the railways have to contend with is wash-outs in the spring floods. When I was leaving the famine district in May, 1923, and wanted to get home, I was held up in this way for three weeks. The spring floods were exceptionally heavy that year ; the river at Buzuluk rose thirty feet in twenty-four hours, and a bridge on the railway to Samara was carried away. It was three weeks before the river fell sufficiently for them to be able to rig up a road bridge across which the passengers and their luggage could be taken to a train waiting on the other side. After that the Red Army engineers made a temporary wooden bridge which would carry a train and in due course the iron bridge was renewed. Naturally floods of this nature occa-

sionally undermine the permanent way and altogether the spring is a busy time on the railways and traffic is liable to be disorganized for a week or two.

Chapter VI: Amusements

LIKE most capitals Moscow is very well provided in the matter of amusements, but practically all of them differ greatly from the corresponding ones in London. This difference arises from two main causes: in the first place I think that it is indisputable that the Russian standard both of artistic performance and of artistic appreciation is definitely higher than the English; in the second place it is recognized that all forms of amusement are educational, and therefore they are not left to the tender mercies of commercial enterprise but are fostered under a special branch of the Commissariat of Education. I may say at once that this does not in the least result in all entertainments being "high-brow"; in fact I think you may safely say that, whether or not this disease is confined to the Nordic races, the Russian enjoys a natural immunity from it.

To what extent, if at all, picture-houses are subsidized I do not know, but the production

of films is in the hands of what is practically a State department under the Narkompros. I introduce this horrible word by way of illustration of my thesis that Russians are not "high-brow"; it is made up by taking the first syllable of each of the words standing for "Peoples' Commissariat of Education" and is about as euphonious in Russian as Himajmined (His Majesty's Ministry of Education) would be in English. In the preparation of these films much excellent work is being done: it seems to me that both the possibilities and limitations of the camera are very clearly realized, with the result that you nearly always feel that they are dealing with and exploring a new artistic medium and not merely trying to combine the old methods of literary and pictorial expression with a new mechanism. I consider that the fact that I can never read the Russian headings in the time allowed provides me with a useful test of whether they are treating their medium with respect or not. With most of what are generally considered the best films I have felt that I was losing very little, though I must admit that others have speedily reduced me to a state of confusion from which I have never afterwards emerged. From this point of view certainly the two best films that I have seen were "Palace and Prison" and one of Tolstoy's peasant stories.

The first of these is extremely powerful, based on the contrast between the life of the political prisoners in the middle of the nineteenth century and that of the Court of the same period. Unfortunately the photography in this film leaves much to be desired (the more recent films are quite satisfactory in this respect), but the excellence of the production makes it to my mind quite the finest I have ever seen. The hero is an aristocratic young officer who joins the revolutionaries, is arrested and confined in the Peter and Paul fortress in Petersburg; here you watch him slowly progressing through loss of mind to death. By some technique that I was not at all able to analyse an impression of an immense lapse of time is produced so that you really feel as if you had passed interminable years with him in this horrible place. Mixed in with the prison scenes are others from the court of the Czar giving not only a strong contrast with the misery of the political victims of the system, but an overpowering feeling of the pretentious worthlessness of the structure that was being preserved by these terrible methods. Then at the very end, when you are feeling almost overpowered with the weight of hopeless misery in an evil world, they show you a post-revolution view of a group of kiddies playing on one of the bastions of the prison that has stood for so

much that it is intolerable to contemplate; and you feel that at any rate that is over and done with for ever. It is quite the most effective piece of propaganda I have ever seen.

The Tolstoy story is perhaps less remarkable and certainly its excellence is more difficult to describe. It is the story of a peasant who loses a letter containing a large sum of money, and, in despair of being able to clear himself of the charge of having stolen it, commits suicide. This story is made to tell itself on the screen, and, though there are a few captions, they are quite unessential to the understanding of the film. Incidentally, it may be cited as a very fine piece of imaginative and restrained acting on the part of the actor taking the rôle of the peasant.

Another film that is certainly worth mentioning is "Mr. West and the Bolsheviks." In this an American tourist who is full of the horrors that the American press are so fond of describing in Russia falls into the hands of a gang, who proceed to "play up" to him and show him all the things for which he is looking. Finally as he is on the point of paying an enormous ransom, he is rescued by the G.P.U., who proceed to show him the real Moscow. One can but admire the skill and restraint of the producers in realizing that it

was not necessary in any way to exaggerate the tales of the foreign press in order to reduce a Moscow audience to helpless laughter.

Another type of film that strikes one as extremely valuable is what may be described as the ethnographic film. Of these a very common type is the Caucasian bandit film following, more or less, on the lines of the Wild West Cowboy film ; but entirely free from the sentimentality that so often invaded the latter. The villain of the piece is the sensuous Prince and the hero the peasant turned bandit. Of more serious scientific interest was a film I saw embodying some of the "Creation" legends of the Altai tribes and registering some of the ancient customs that still survive amongst them. It is in connection with this film that the rather amusing story is told that one of the producers was making elaborate arrangements to collect and train a large crowd of "supers," when another pointed out that all that was necessary was to buy a few dozen sheep at a shilling or two each and sufficient natives would collect to give a thoroughly realistic production of an "Altai" feast. The result, obtained I believe by the latter means, is certainly most convincing ; you can almost smell the hot mutton fat as they smear it over their faces. A good deal is being done on these lines to supplement

the very serious ethnographic work that is now being undertaken all over the Soviet Union.

Of the definitely propaganda films it is not necessary to say much more ; one of the best of them has been shown in Western Europe, but not, I believe, in England, namely the one which describes the naval revolt in the Black Sea in 1905. It is worth mentioning however that in the cinema, as in all other propaganda, the methods during the last year have grown progressively less crude and what had become to most people a wearisome reiteration of well-worn themes, is now replaced by much subtler effects. There is also a considerable amount of really excellent " Health " propaganda carried on. The two or three films of this nature that I have seen seemed to excite the greatest interest in an audience that did not differ in externals from the ordinary " movie " crowd.

With regard to the acting there is one outstanding feature, and that is the very high level attained by the " supers." One of the best effects in the Naval film just mentioned is obtained by the contrast between the crowd and the Cossacks as the latter clear the great staircase leading down to the sea. The change in the crowd from eager excitement to terror, and the inexorable advance of the Cossacks,

form a piece of mass acting that produces a remarkable effect. Perhaps the best example of this mass acting that I have seen was in a film that has left no other impression at all on my mind. I cannot even remember whether it was a definitely propagandist film or not, though I suppose it must have been. The scene that I remember was a meeting mostly of young people somewhere in the country, where the announcement is made "Lenin is dead"; and that look of deep personal sorrow sweeps over the audience that one grew so familiar with in Moscow during the days that he was lying in state. It was a wonderful experience to be in Moscow at that time, and to find oneself immersed in such a powerful mass emotion as that which then swept over the town; the more remarkable in that it was entirely free from any of that gloominess that we English so often feel that it is seemly to affect in connection with death. As you watched the queues of people waiting to see him lying in state, you saw plenty of laughing and cheerful talk going on, but there or in a tram or as you passed a man in the street something would occur to bring the thoughts back to the central event of the time and you would see the expression of personal loss spread over the face once more. It is very difficult to describe what Moscow was

like then to anyone who did not see it themselves, but to reproduce just that effect by the change in the expression of some hundred faces seems to me to be a very remarkable achievement.

The comic films are, to my mind, not entirely satisfactory ; this I think is chiefly due to the difference in the sense of humour in the two nations. I have never found any joke too subtle for Russians, but certainly a good many Russian jokes are a good deal too brutal for me. They are often amused by things in which the element of cruelty seems to me to swamp the element of humour ; and this makes some of their comic films rather painful to the Westerner. This does not apply to the one I have mentioned " Mr. West and the Bolsheviks," which I consider perfectly delightful ; but one or two that I have seen seemed to me to be spoilt by a coarseness from which, however, I should certainly hesitate to say that Hollywood is free.

The picture-houses themselves are never very gorgeous according to English ideas. There are perhaps a dozen of what would be considered medium-sized ones in London. Most of these cater for the Russian habit of assembling long before the performance starts, by providing a really good orchestra which plays in the entrance hall. A few seats are provided,

but the greater part of the audience just walk round and round admiring themselves and each other. To complete their enjoyment every place of entertainment provides a plentiful supply of looking-glasses which are used with perfect frankness by men and women alike. It is a curious difference of national character that no Russian is the least ashamed of being seen looking at himself in the glass. He will often make the excuse of combing his hair, an operation freely performed in public, but then again he will often simply stand and contemplate himself. I remember once sitting in a restaurant when a young woman came in, and sitting down with a large mirror not more than three feet from the end of her nose remarked : " What a convenient seat ! "

The largest hall used as a cinema is the concert hall of the Conservatorium, which seats well over a thousand, and is generally well filled. In addition to these there are a large number of small houses scattered all over the town and most of them well patronized. The prices are rather high ; the better houses seldom have any seats much under two shillings, though at the Conservatorium the cheapest seats are usually only about one shilling. Even quite small cinemas showing old films will often charge one and two shillings and I have seen very few places of any sort

where you could get in for as little as sixpence. There is however one exception to this rule, and that is a picture-house where they show nothing but definitely educational films. In this place the prices range from about fivepence to one and sixpence, and I think I am right in saying that members of Trade Unions are admitted at half-price. This is a most excellent institution, where you can see all the best educational films of the world ; I myself saw the Everest film there. There is a regular afternoon performance for the benefit of children, who are admitted for a very small sum.

It is certainly remarkable that the cinemas are constantly full even with these high prices, and any statement about the general poverty of Russia must be considered in the light of this fact. It is undoubtedly true that many Russians will go without a good many things that an Englishman considers necessaries, in order to go to the " movies," but even allowing for this the crowds that attend every night are evidence that many of the statements made about the poverty of the populace are obviously exaggerated.

So much has been written about the Russian theatre that I do not propose to add to it, especially as I myself have very few opportunities of attending, being generally occupied

with teaching in the evening. The theatres all start at 7.30, and unlike other entertainments in Russia, start punctually ; also if you are not in your place when the curtain rises you have to wait till the end of the first act before you are allowed to enter. One thing however must be insisted on—practically all the theatres are subsidized and are thus enabled to make the very interesting and varied experiments which I understand are beginning to influence even the commercialized stage in England, at any rate that section of it that is managed by people who are striving after the highest standard of art obtainable without losing too much money.

It seems to be much less clearly realized what a wonderful musical centre Moscow is. Not only is the standard of executive ability extremely high, but there are two or three large audiences interested in good music. I say two or three, because it is very noticeable that the public is very different in character at different descriptions of concerts, though the general impression is that the great majority of the concert public consists of brain-workers. This I think is due to the fact that the Russian manual worker gets so much first-class music in his club, and not to the fact that he is indifferent to it.

Perhaps the most outstanding feature of

Moscow music is the Persymfance (another beautiful word which stands for First Symphonic Ensemble). This is an orchestra that plays without a conductor. I ought to say at once that I make no pretensions whatever to any knowledge of music, a fact that I fear will soon be painfully apparent to those of my readers who do; all I can claim is to be extremely fond of it and, generally, to know what I like after two or three hearings. It is the fashion amongst Moscow musicians to speak rather disparagingly of the Persymfance, but I always find their concerts extremely enjoyable. It is true that when they are playing music that is new to me, especially when it is difficult to understand, I do not find that they take me nearly as far as such a conductor as Klemperer; but with straightforward music, or music which I know well, I consider that they are very hard to beat. In the first place their synchronization is simply wonderful. In the most rapid passages the violins play absolutely as one, so that every note can be heard, and this of itself means new revelations to one who is only acquainted with English orchestras. In the second place the wealth and variety of tone are of a nature that I had always imagined could only be attained by a really first-class soloist. These results are only made possible by the fact

that every member of the orchestra is not only a first-class executant, but also a real musician.

How the orchestra was originally formed I do not know, but now it is extremely difficult for even a first-rate performer to get into it; as far as I know they have only admitted one new violinist during the last two years. All the members of the orchestra have an equal share in the proceeds, whether they are playing or not, there being no class distinctions between first and second fiddles, for instance. At first they had a very difficult time financially, and were only saved from extinction by a small subsidy. Those days however are now long past and they have to repeat all their concerts twice in order to meet the demand for season tickets. Even so the demand for all but the highest-priced tickets much exceeds the supply, and unless you are the happy holder of a last year's season and therefore entitled to renew it, you will hardly get one for less than £3. Tickets for a single concert are very seldom obtainable for less than eight or ten shillings. I have heard that nowadays each member makes about £2 for every performance and they consider that this justifies them in giving a large number of concerts at various clubs to which the public are not admitted, and the charge for admission, if there is any, is trivial. A very large percentage

of the performers are Jews, nearly all of the strings and over eighty per cent of the whole, I have been told. Now that they are well established they take their duties towards the improvement of Russian music very seriously and do a great deal over and above the large number of practically free concerts that they give. As most of their members are otherwise engaged during the week they perform on Monday evenings, the night when the Opera and Theatres are closed. The club concerts are generally given on Sunday afternoons.

Last winter they gave twelve concerts, each repeated twice, so that if you have a season you get a concert every fortnight. The year before they gave fifteen concerts. The programmes are extremely varied, generally including most if not all of the Beethoven symphonies, and each year an increasing amount of modern music. I have heard them play the Fifth Symphony five or six times during the last few years; each time I felt that there was a real improvement and the last time it seemed to me to be without doubt the most thoroughly satisfactory performance of it I had ever heard. Each of the last two years they have done the Ninth Symphony, no mean feat without a conductor, and done it very well, considering how unsatisfactory

the chorus is. I have heard all the choruses that have the best reputation in Russia and have heard them in a considerable variety of music, and it seems to me that our choruses are as superior to the Russian as our orchestras are inferior. Any good north-country choir has a far greater command of tone and variety of quality than has the famous Leningrad Capella or any other chorus I have ever heard in a Russian concert hall. I have heard the Ninth Symphony eight or ten times in all in Moscow, and only once, when Klemperer was conducting, did the chorus seem to me to be passable according to English standards.

After the Persymfance as providers of concerts come the Russphil (Russian Philharmonic). There seems to have been a great deal of internal politics in this organization, for in the middle of the last season they changed their name to " the Central Concert Bureau " ; also they promised us about thirty-four concerts and only gave us twenty-five. The orchestral concerts given under their ægis are with the orchestra of the Opera of which about eighty per cent are individually the same as the Persymfance. This is an orchestra which, according to Oscara Fried, the Berlin conductor, can challenge comparison with any orchestra in Europe. As this remark was made in Russia my readers may feel that

they must to some extent discount it. For myself I can honestly say that having heard him conduct it many times, including all the Beethoven Symphonies, it has never seemed to me that he has asked anything of it that it has not been able to give him. Dal Young, the pianist and composer, once said to me : "Anyone can hit them hard, or hit them soft, but to get a big body of sound and bring it out soft needs Paderewski." Judged on this standard the Big Theatre orchestra fills the bill, for I have heard Fried make this orchestra play so softly that you were barely conscious of the sound, without losing body of tone. There is no question in my mind that with a conductor of the calibre of Klemperer or even Fried they are superior to the Persymfance playing without a conductor ; but I should certainly say that the Persymfance are better without a conductor than another orchestra playing with any conductor at present available in Russia. The Big Theatre Orchestra gives ten or twelve concerts every winter, generally on Sunday afternoons. The programmes, I suppose, depend largely on the various conductors, but are very varied and usually include a good deal of modern music. Tickets for single concerts cost from two to fifteen or sixteen shillings.

Unfortunately there is some sort of feud going on between the Persymfance and the authority that arranges the other concerts; in fact things actually came to a lawsuit last year and the organizer of the Persymfance had to apologize for some of his remarks. This lack of co-operation sometimes leads to interesting results; for instance, last year we had Tchaikovski's Pathetic symphony three times, within a little more than a month. The first time was with an inferior conductor who shall be nameless and who was apparently trying to make it cheery. The second was with the Persymfance, and the third with the Opera orchestra under Oscara Fried. These two were both of them outstanding performances, but I certainly thought that the Persymfance brought out that terrible note of pessimism that runs right through it, better than Fried did.

The Opera is certainly at its best when performing Russian Opera of which very few people outside Russia realize the wealth and variety. Their performance of "Sadko" or any of the Glinka operas leaves nothing to be desired; and my remarks about Russian choruses certainly do not apply to the Big Theatre chorus singing in opera. In addition to the Big Theatre which does opera four nights and ballet two nights a week, there is

the Experimental Theatre run in connection with it, where the performance is only slightly less excellent. There are also two other theatres devoting themselves to light opera and operetta.

The most interesting performance of a foreign opera that I have seen is the Big Theatre production of "Lohengrin." This is a most magnificent spectacle, and as they possess just that virtuosity in the production of a spectacle that Wagner has in the production of music, you feel that it is a performance that would have impressed even Wagner himself. "Boris Godounov" they must, of course, produce without Chaliapin, and they have as yet found no one who is at all adequate to take his place; in every other way their performance of this magnificent opera is all that it should be.

With regard to the singing it is impossible to be very enthusiastic; it always seems to me that the Russian school of singing is quite definitely bad. There is one contralto at the Big Theatre who seems to me to have a really well-trained though not very powerful voice, but all the rest of the women and most of the men give one the impression of being definitely mistrained. The standard of acting, on the other hand, is distinctly high.

When we come to chamber-music we find that Moscow is exceptionally well situated, for there

are two really first-class quartets, both of them giving a large number of concerts. Three times they have had competitions to decide which of the various quartets was the best. Five or six have entered each time, but though it was easy to say that the Conservatorium and the Stradivarius quartets were better than any of the others, they have never been able to come to a decision as to which of these two was the best. The finest individual performer is, without doubt, the first violin in the Conservatorium Quartet, but I have often felt that he was a little too good, and that the quartet was apt to degenerate into a violin solo with a string accompaniment. The last two or three times that I have heard them they seemed to me to have become aware of this danger and to be getting a better ensemble ; if they succeed in doing this they should form a combination that it would be very difficult to criticize. In the Stradivarius Quartet the leaders are the viola and the 'cello, both of them fine musicians and remarkable executants, and the violins are played by two exceptionally brilliant youngsters both of whom promise to go very far before they are finished. The advantage of this arrangement is to my mind very apparent, resulting as it does in a perfect balance between the four instruments. If the boy, for he is no more, who plays first

violin shows any tendency to assert himself too much, or to " play to the audience," they give him the strap when they get him home, and the balance is restored. The whole history of this quartet is interesting. It was formed very soon after the Revolution when the Stradivarius instruments that had been kept in the glass cases of the nobility were nationalized. Instead of putting them into other glass cases they gave them to four great executants to produce the music for which they were made. Since the formation of the Quartet eight years ago they have averaged just over two concerts a week. The original viola and 'cello are still playing, one of the violins has gone to America, where I believe he is doing well, and the other was changed this year. The first violin was given a new instrument last year and it is an extremely good example of the master's skill. The viola and 'cello are, I should imagine, two of the finest instruments in the world. I have often heard musicians say that the worship of Stradivarius's workmanship has been overdone and that there are plenty of other instruments that are as good or better ; but I should find it very hard to believe that there is a better 'cello anywhere than that played by this quartet.

Last year they gave us sixteen concerts, the programmes ranging over the whole of music,

classical and modern. These were, I think, the most enjoyable concerts that I have ever been to ; they were given in a small L-shaped hall, the bulk of the audience being seated in the ordinary way in the long limb of the L. The short limb was fitted up as a sort of ' foyer' with chairs and divans taken from the palaces of the quondam nobility and during the performance all the lights were turned down except a large lamp on the platform. It was therefore possible to sit in the short limb in an extremely comfortable chair with no glaring lights to distract you and listen to as finished a performance as you could hear anywhere in the world. There are two other quartets that deserve mention ; one is the Glinka Quartet formed by four young fellows who have just left the Conservatorium, and the other the Armenian Quartet, all the members of which are Armenians. Either of these would attract attention almost anywhere but in Moscow. It is perhaps worth mentioning that only one member of all these quartets is over thirty, so that the future seems assured for some time.

Till two years ago there was also a very remarkable trio, consisting of three professors of the Conservatorium who had been playing together for over thirty years and who had done a splendid work for Russian music, especially in giving first-class concerts in the

small towns of the provinces. I had the privilege of hearing them twice and they produced just that sense of perfect satisfaction that the Joachim–Ries Quartet used to do. The pianist is still alive, but as far as I know has not performed in public since the death of his two colleagues. It is satisfactory to note that the younger generation are trying to carry on the work, for they have formed a trio with the son of the old violinist playing the 'cello and the son of the pianist at the piano. I heard their first concert, and though it did not strike me as in any way a remarkable performance I certainly thought that the pianist was a fine musician, and as they are all quite young there is plenty of time for them to develop.

With regard to soloists I should not say that Moscow is particularly well off, and they depend chiefly on foreign talent; they have however a really first-class violinist in Blinder. He was discovered playing in an Odessa café by one of the professors of the Conservatorium and was brought to Moscow, where they succeeded in training without spoiling him. I have been told that he is still almost illiterate, but he is certainly a very fine musician.

Of good pianists there are a very large number, but I always think there is something lacking in the Russian school. Brilliance there is in abundance perhaps, especially

amongst the young men ; there are quite a number who can make you hear an enormous number of notes per second. Good sound interpretation you may almost always be sure of, notably from a young pianist of about twenty-four who played us all the Beethoven sonatas in six concerts during the Beethoven celebrations last year. But of that mastery of the piano as an instrument that Paderewski has taught us to be possible, I do not think I have seen any signs. Certainly the older and established pianists are definitely lacking in colour and variety of tone.

During the summer there is a good deal of open-air music in the Parks, etc. This is mostly orchestral ; in the matter of brass bands I have heard nothing in Russia so good as our best military or north-country bands. This reflects itself to some extent in the orchestras, the brass of which though adequate is generally less satisfactory than the strings or wood wind.

With regard to the content of the programmes in general I should say that Bach and Beethoven take about the same place as they do in England. The lesser German composers, such as Schubert, Schuman, Mendelssohn and Brahms, seem to me to be definitely neglected, their place being largely taken by the Russian School of Borodin, Moussorgsky,

Rimsky-Korsakov, etc., the last mentioned being placed very definitely on a lower level than the rest. Tchaikovski is a standing dish. Glazounov is performed a good deal, but does not I think rank very high. Taneiev, on the other hand, is I think rightly placed in the first class. Why in a country with such a passion for oratorio as England his "John of Damascus" is practically unknown I do not understand, for in my opinion it is quite one of the most outstanding examples of real religious music that has ever been produced. His chamber music is also extremely popular and indeed it seems to me that few musicians have a finer appreciation of the possibilities and limitations of the quartet as an artistic medium. Of the moderns Scriabin stands out far above all the others ; in fact, most Russians consider him as a classic, and many would I think put him in the very first place amongst the musicians of the world. It is very noticable that it is always the most modern music that draws forth the most enthusiastic applause. The first time that Onega's steam engine (or is it a submarine ?) was performed it had to be repeated twice before the audience would allow the programme to proceed. I have never heard any English music in Russia. It should be mentioned that each year the Persymfance issue a questionnaire asking the

season-ticket holders for criticism on the last season and suggestions for the next.

Much more might be said, by a competent critic, about the musical fare provided, but I hope I have said enough to show that it must indeed be a voracious appetite that cannot be satisfied by it.

Chapter VII: Religion and Morals

WERE it not for the fact that I am invariably asked about the position of the Church in Russia, I would willingly omit all mention of the subject; for it is impossible for me to speak of it without departing from the rule that I have made for myself, of only speaking of that of which I have first-hand knowledge. In order to understand the position to-day it is necessary to understand the state of things before the Revolution; in nothing is it more true that what we see now is largely a revulsion from the state of things that existed under the old regime. I have therefore had to form an opinion of the former State Church for my own satisfaction, in order to account for what I see around me; how far that opinion is just it is impossible for me to say, but I have done my best to form a just one and the conclusions I have come to account for the facts, to my own satisfaction at least.

There can be no doubt at all that the Russian

Church before the Revolution was something very different from anything that we have known in England for at least two and a half centuries. Whether the English Church in the seventeenth century bore any real resemblance to the Russian Church in the nineteenth I must leave to the historians.

The first ray of light on the situation that I received was when a Communist friend of mine told me that in the old days the instrument of the tyranny in the towns was the secret police and in the villages was the Church. By which I suppose he meant that anyone showing any independence or signs of revolt against the existing regime was at once threatened with the thunders of the Church, and if this did not bring him to heel he was handed over to the temporal power. I naturally did not feel prepared to accept this *ex parte* statement as final, but since then I have repeated it to a large number of people holding all sorts of views and have never received anything like a convincing denial of its truth. The second point that seems to me to be quite clear is that it is against the quondam State Church that the "anti-religious" campaign is carried on and not against religion as such, though of course no Communist may be a Christian. This seems to be shown by the fact that the Baptists have increased their

membership by something like two million since the Revolution. Another point that has from time to time struck me very forcibly is that amongst young people in Russia you are constantly coming across just that frame of mind that began to be common in England in the 'eighties and 'nineties, a feeling of wonderful relief and freedom to find that you didn't "have to be religious." How much of the religion of "Holy Russia" was mere formality I can, of course, have no idea. That it was not all of this character I am quite certain ; for I have known many people who have a real personal religion that is the very centre of their lives, and I have met these people amongst the peasants, amongst the intelligentsia and amongst the remnants of the old aristocracy. Nevertheless it does not demand any profound knowledge of human nature to see that a Church that is simply a department of the State—and that State an absolute Tyranny—will have a very large number of members whose religion means nothing of any value to themselves or to anyone who wishes them well. Now against this State Church the Communist Party has declared a relentless war in all temporal matters. In spiritual matters it is, as far as I know, entirely passive. I have never heard of any interference whatever in matters of worship

and there has certainly been nothing comparable to the interference that our British Parliament has recently felt it to be its duty to enforce on the English State Church. All the stories that one hears about closing churches and converting them into cinemas are pure nonsense. One extremely ugly little church in the centre of Moscow has been pulled down and a delightful little garden substituted; and a small chantry in the worst possible nineteenth century taste which caused an obstruction at an extremely busy corner has been removed, thereby revealing an exquisite little sixteenth-century church on which it had been plastered. I believe that there are a few of the numberless churches in Moscow that are not functioning, as there are no priests to serve them. There is one more point in this connection that should be mentioned. I once said to a friend of mine that many English people believed that all the churches in Russia had been closed, and he replied that he always felt as if that was the case. I asked him to explain and he said, "The only time I ever went to church was to the midnight service on Easter Eve, when I used always to go to the big square in the Kremlin. Now that the Kremlin is closed to the public I never go to church at all."

On the temporal side action has been extremely drastic. All Church property was

seized. Articles of historic or artistic interest were collected with great care for museums, but a great deal of plate and so on was simply alienated. The monasteries were broken up, nearly all their land was taken from them and most of the monks were dispersed, a few being left as caretakers. Some of the monasteries are used as barracks, some as museums ; one I visited was being used as a lunatic asylum, another as a rest home ; some are apparently left derelict with a few doddering old men seeing out the melancholy remnant of their days. At one such I stopped in the Caucasus last year. We were entertained by a charming courteous old monk who was evidently of peasant origin and who spoke such simple Russian that I could understand nearly everything that he said. What I missed I asked my companion about afterwards and this is what he told us. When his part of the country was finally subjugated by the Bolsheviks, nearly all the monastery's land and property was seized ; the younger monks were taken for the Red Army and the older ones were told that they must sign a contract in order to have the use of their buildings ; they would not have to pay anything for them, but some of the monks considered that to sign any contract would be to make an agreement with Antichrist. They therefore departed to

a succession of other monasteries where the process was repeated, until at last they were sent into exile. Those who remained were given a little land and a few implements and told to set to work to keep themselves ; after two or three years the Communists descended on them again and took the little accumulation of property that they had got together. This indeed seems very hard, but it must be remembered that the property they had accumulated was not the result of their work. The poor old chaps were too feeble to keep themselves, much less to accumulate anything ; what they had got was through the charity of the neighbouring Cossack villagers who are of course thoroughly "disaffected." If they had been left alone the local Soviet would have been faced before long with the problem of a wealthy and hostile corporation growing up in their midst. As to whether this justifies their action opinions will differ, but at any rate it explains it.

Another matter in which there is interference is in the teaching of religion to children. Religious instruction may not be given in any school, or to more than five children at once. How much this edict interferes with any arrangements that the clergy would be likely to make I have no idea. Before the Revolution religious instruction took a very large

place in all schools and colleges ; this has of course been entirely swept away, and as a friend of mine expressed it, " They use political instruction to bore the pupils with now." The character of the teaching in the old days may be more or less judged by his statement that he always got very good marks for religion as he had a natural aptitude for remembering heresies though he could never remember what was wrong with them.

The old privileged position of the clergy has of course been entirely destroyed and a priest is now in exactly the same position as a Nepman in that he has no civil rights. I have always heard that large numbers of them have returned to civil life since the Revolution. Those of my readers who prefer to do so can believe the atrocity stories, and attribute the enormous decrease in their numbers to wholesale executions and so on. It is no easier to form an opinion in Russia on the question of atrocities than it is in England. You hear as many contradictory stories there as here ; and there, as here, you hear them from sources that you would readily credit on any other subject. Personally I formed the habit during the Boer War of rejecting from my mind all atrocities. This habit was enormously strengthened during the Great War and in both these instances the general consensus of opinion

largely came round, as passions became cool, to the attitude that I had adopted almost instinctively. Having proved to my own satisfaction on these two occasions that my attitude was right, I take the liberty of paying no attention to Russian atrocities until evidence of a very much stronger character is produced than was produced for the German atrocities which were freely accepted during the war, and are now as freely rejected. How strong that evidence was it is difficult now to remember, but it was certainly strong enough to convince many who tried to form a just estimate and did not simply reject them (as I did) from unreasoning prejudice. Of course I do not mean that I believe that either a war or a Revolution can be carried through without atrocious things being done; but that evidence for these atrocities, or for their systematization and direction by the "Higher Command" can be lightly accepted, I do not believe; and I have long since given up any idea that you can find more reliable evidence in Russia than in England on the subject of the Red Terror.

It is always the habit of English people to establish a very close connection between religion and morals, and though I am very far from being convinced that there is any such connection in the minds of those who live

to the east of, say, Vienna, this seems a convenient opportunity for speaking of the general moral standard one finds in Russia.

Personally I do not believe that this has been materially affected by the Revolution, and nothing will persuade me that the abolition of compulsory religion is going to weaken the moral sanctions of anyone ; nor can I believe that my friend's relations to his neighbour are affected by the fact that he no longer goes to church once a year. I think a far more profitable line to pursue in looking for an explanation of the present state of things lies in the fact that Russia is in many ways still in the seventeenth century, and also that it is at least as much an Eastern as it is a Western country.

If we take the theologian's standard of sin we can say at once that Russians are singularly free from the greatest of all sins, namely pride ; but this is so much the besetting sin of us Englishmen that many of us feel that we are being trifled with if it is called a sin at all. What most Britons expect to hear about under this head are the standards of honesty and sexual morality. With regard to the former it is indisputable that the standard is extremely low in almost every department of life. Nothing strikes one more in coming home from Russia than the casual way in which one may safely leave things about in England.

In Russia you cannot leave your luggage for a single instant in a railway station. When you come to one of those long stops that are so common on a Russian train, it is the custom to arrange with your fellow-passengers to go to the refreshment buffet in relays so that one of you may be in the compartment all the time. No motor-car is ever left unattended in the street. The English method of delivering milk would be quite impossible. One might multiply instances almost without end. With regard to deliberate, as opposed to casual, thieving the position is the same ; I should be very surprised to hear of anyone who had lived long in Moscow who had never had his pocket picked. This has never happened to me in England, but has occurred three times during the five years that I have lived in Moscow. A friend of mine showed me a Waterman fountain-pen that he had bought in the street for ten shillings, remarking that it must have been stolen, as the price in the shops is about thirty shillings. In less than a fortnight I asked him where it was and he smiled a little sheepishly as he told me that he had lost it ; whether the same gentleman who sold it to him had found it I do not know. Business men have told me that in commercial transactions you can never depend on a Russian keeping a bargain if he finds it un-

profitable to do so. In minor matters this is certainly the case ; I have long since given up expecting any Russian to keep an appointment. An Englishman will generally feel that if he has made a promise, at any rate he ought to keep it ; a Russian will never do a thing he doesn't want to because the day before yesterday he said he would want to. I did once meet a youth with a higher standard, who, when I asked him on a Monday to come and see my new room on the following Thursday, replied : " How can I tell what I shall be doing on Thursday? I'm not a German " ; but generally they quite cheerfully promise to do anything you ask them and never give the matter another thought.

When we move over into the intellectual sphere, on the other hand, the position is exactly reversed. It is as rare to meet a Russian who is not intellectually honest as it is to meet an Englishman who is. This makes it extremely difficult to compare the respective standards with regard to sexual morality ; for that atmosphere of furtiveness and secrecy which is still so common in England in these matters is entirely absent in Russia. Your first impression on hearing Russians discuss these questions is that they have no moral standard at all, but I am now inclined to think that the average Russian

behaves very much as the average Englishman really does; though he certainly behaves very differently from the way the average Englishman pretends he does.

The first thing to realize is that there is absolute equality of the sexes in every way. I gather that except legally this was very much more the case in pre-Revolution Russia than in most countries. The Revolution extended this attitude to the legal side and there is now no distinction whatever between the sexes before the law. Even with regard to work there is much less specialization than in England. There are, for instance, a few women tram-drivers in Moscow and, though men are much more common than women as shop servers, the few women you see may apparently be engaged in any department. There is of course no difference in pay between men and women doing the same work. All this is even more marked in social matters. I notice, for instance, a delightful and healthy comradeship between my men and women students that is far more common and natural than anything of the sort that I have ever observed even in post-war England. I think that it would be true to say that very few Englishmen ever speak to a woman without being conscious that it is a woman that they are speaking to. This is certainly not the case

in Russia ; my students seem to me to treat each other in exactly the same way whether they belong to the same sex or not. Certainly I have never noticed that rather blatant demand to be treated socially not as a superior or as an inferior but as an equal that is so marked a characteristic of the manner of many young women in England nowadays. One of the reasons that I have for thinking that this position is not a product of the Revolution is that it seems to me that most Russians are really not conscious of sex at all, except when they are concerned with matters of sex. This attitude certainly simplifies life enormously, for many situations that would be considered awkward or even improper in England are taken perfectly naturally in Russia. There is, for instance, no embarrassment whatever when men and women find themselves sleeping in the same railway compartment. No men and very few women wear costumes when bathing, and the close proximity of the men's and women's bathing places on the rivers or at the seaside is rather startling at first, but I have never heard a Russian suggest that this was either pleasing or disgusting.

These remarks about the position of women must be taken as applying only to the town and perhaps only partially to the manual workers even there. When I lived amongst

the peasants it seemed to me that the relations between the sexes was just what you always find in a primitive state of society; namely that each sex has its own department in which its authority is undisputed. The departments may vary from Continent to Continent, but I do not think the principle of separation into departments does.

To my mind, however, it is with regard to the question of marriage and divorce that the present position is most interesting, and in this matter we have a very marked example of the intellectual honesty that I was speaking of; for, having decided to disregard the Christian law of marriage, they really do disregard it. They neither try to modify it nor do they allow themselves to be influenced by a revulsion from it. The whole tendency is to try and work out *ab initio* a satisfactory law for the use of ordinary people. I do not think that even the Communists themselves consider that they have as yet solved the problem. But when we contemplate the extraordinary muddle in which we have landed ourselves in the West, by trying to impose the Christian law of marriage on those who are only nominally Christians, and the disastrous effect of some of the modifications that we have sought to apply, I think that everyone must feel that a courageous attempt to tackle the problem

afresh and evolve a law that the ordinary man can keep, may be of inestimable benefit to all civilized nations and can hardly result in a worse state of things than that which we see around us. Whether or not the Communists think that they have solved the problem, I certainly do not think so. It appears to me that the present condition is one of simple chaos; perhaps this is because being an Englishman I cannot rid my mind of its prejudices or if you like insincerities, but it certainly seems to me that something much more is needed than they have at present evolved.

The actual law, briefly, is this. Only civil marriage is recognized before the law. People are at perfect liberty to be married in church if they wish to, but the ceremony imposes no legal obligations. The legal position of the man and the woman is exactly the same; each retains their own property, and neither can exert any legal compulsion on the other. If, for instance, a man goes to work in another town he cannot compel his wife to go with him, nor does her refusal to do so necessarily entail a divorce. The cost of a civil marriage is trivial, but each party has to produce evidence that they are not already married. It is easier to get a divorce than to get married. All that is necessary is for either the man or

the woman to go before a magistrate and declare their desire for a divorce. If there are any children the magistrate will make an order for their maintenance, and against this order there is an appeal to the higher courts; but against the order for the divorce there is no appeal. I believe that in the case of one of the parties being an invalid there may be some obligation on the other to provide for his or her support, but of this I am not at all sure.

Under these conditions there seems to be no particular object in going through the form of marriage at all; and I gather from fairly extensive enquiries that this is a very generally accepted view. "My wife" generally means the woman with whom I habitually and regularly live and implies nothing about legal status. If the connection is not a habitual one the term "wife" is apparently not used. To call this state of things a "law of marriage" seems to me to be ridiculous. Whether in course of time a real law will be evolved and whether that law will be a real approximation to a solution of this extremely complicated problem, seems to me to be questions of the greatest interest; but I do not think that there is as yet any indication of what the answers will be. Meanwhile I should say that a great many of these "connections" that I

have observed seem to me to be perfectly stable and I have been a good deal impressed with the genuine friendship, as distinct from passion or love, that one observes between "husband" and "wife."

Perhaps a word should be added on the subject of prostitution. There are two boulevards that have the reputation of being resorts with this object. One of these lies on my way to the house of some friends and I have frequently passed down it at night. There you nearly always see two or three women who are evidently hanging about for this purpose. The other lies quite off my track and, though I once visited it out of curiosity, I saw nothing to support its reputation. In addition to this there is one café which, with the street outside, has the same reputation; whether this has any connection with the fact that it is underneath the hotel in which most of the foreign delegates to the Third International are housed, I do not know, but I think I have been told that it was a place of this character long before the Revolution. I have frequently been in this café at all hours of the night and two or three years ago it used to be full of well-dressed women who obviously belonged to the oldest profession in the world. Then about two years ago they suddenly disappeared; what the cause of this was I have no idea. Just

lately it has seemed to me, on one or two occasions, that they were coming back, but not to any great extent. Further, a young Russian I know was really shocked when an American with whom he was acquainted went to a certain hotel where dancing fox-trots is allowed ; this is forbidden in Russia except by special licence which it is very difficult to obtain. He said that no woman would dance the fox-trot there who was not a prostitute and that therefore no respectable man would go there. I attribute his displeasure entirely to his feeling that to delight in the society of such women was bourgeois ; it certainly was not due to a high standard of what is usually called morality. This is a hotel exclusively patronized by foreigners and the most successful of the Nepmen, both of which classes may be supposed to have tastes in this matter which a Communist will consider perverted.

Such are the facts as I know them. To say that there is no prostitution in Moscow is an exaggeration ; to say that there is less than in any other capital in Europe would, I think, be quite safe. I should say that there is much less than in any English provincial town that I have ever known. Personally I have never been solicited in the streets and my general impression is that prostitution is no part of

the regular life of the city but that, as far as it goes, it is intended for visitors, amongst whom should perhaps be included the visiting peasant, but of this last I am not at all sure.

Chapter VIII: Education

IN considering the problems of education in Russia the first thing that is necessary, is to realize the enormous difference between the conditions there and those at home. In the first place a very considerable portion of the population of the Soviet Union consists of practically savage tribes and indeed amongst the hundreds of nations and races that make up what we are in the habit of calling "Russia," you can find all stages of civilization. There are five official languages, which are used, for instance, in printing bank notes; in the Caucasus alone forty odd languages are said to be spoken. This alone would make the problem sufficiently complex and there can be no doubt that the Communists have acted wisely in putting Education very largely under local control. Each of the constituent nations of the Soviet Union has a very large measure of autonomy in this matter. How great a contrast this forms with the old regime, when half of the population was forbidden to

learn to read or write the language they spoke, it is difficult for us to realize ; but it is not difficult to see that this freedom in the matter of language has had a very great effect in awakening interest in matters educational amongst the lesser nations.

My own experience has been confined to education in Great Russia and it is of this that I wish to speak. Here again it is important to understand the state of things when the Bolsheviks took over ten years ago. At that time something like eighty per cent of the population are said to have been absolutely illiterate, and the great majority who had had any schooling at all had received it in a Church school where beyond reading and writing hardly anything was taught except religion. To this must be added that there were large areas to which even a few years ago most of that which we usually associate with civilization had hardly penetrated at all. I once met a man of about my own age who had lived all his life in a little out-of-the-way Volga village. He told me that when he was a boy they used to light their houses with a torch thrust into a forked iron spike ; they spun their thread with a distaff ; they harvested their corn by plucking it up by the roots. That man had lived to see the introduction of candles, lamps and electric light. He had

seen the first spinning wheel introduced into the village when he was about ten years old, and as he talked with me he was wearing a shirt that had undoubtedly been spun and woven by modern machinery. He had seen the sickle adopted as a new and wonderful invention only to be superseded by the scythe and finally by the American self-binder. He told me how the first reaping machines came to the village and how they all watched this wonderful new invention. After a time he missed his old mother from the little crowd and on searching for her discovered her in a corner weeping bitterly. . . . No, she was not weeping that these new-fangled and impious machines had invaded the virgin simplicity of the community in which she had grown up to old age; she was weeping to think what fools they were when they pulled up the corn with their hands. And the railway had been constructed through the village the year before he was born. He himself was one of the three adults in the village who at the time of the Revolution could read and write.

It is, I think, impossible for an Englishman to conceive of the depth of ignorance of the Russian peasant. I should not be in the least surprised to meet one now, who had never seen or heard of such a modern and elaborate invention as a candle. But to infer from this ignorance

that he is stupid or impervious to new ideas would be the greatest possible mistake. The problem that has faced the Bolsheviks has not been that of lifting 140 millions of people out of a state of ignorance, but that of supplying, with the most inadequate means, the education that the population was insistently demanding.

The first thing that they did was to establish an enormous number of schools. But it did not take them long to realize that a school of some fifty children under an untrained teacher (who could very likely do little more than read and write himself) without books, paper, slates or pencils, could hardly serve any useful purpose, and that the establishment of such schools was a useless dissipation of their very meagre resources. The policy was therefore adopted of only maintaining those schools that could be equipped with reasonable efficiency. The local demand was in most cases so strong that the standard of equipment, both personal and material, was reduced far below what would be considered the minimum in England. With one exception the schools that I saw in the Volga valley in 1923 seemed to me to be below the standard that would have justified their existence. The exception was in the hands of a very remarkable young man of about twenty-eight. He had managed to collect about a dozen books, no two of which

were duplicates, and had begged from the station-master twenty miles away a considerable number of old way-bills, etc., which were blank on one side. I was able to give him about a dozen pencils, and he felt that his difficulties had practically been surmounted. He was working two shifts of four hours each, and had in all about eighty children in his school. I did not see any actual teaching, as I passed through the village just at the change of shifts ; but the children struck me as being orderly and extremely keen. He had the enthusiastic backing of the villagers, who were managing to support him by contributions from their own very slender resources.

Since that time I have seen nothing of the education of children and can only add what is of common knowledge. It is a great boast of the nation that they have avoided many of the mistakes of more Western peoples and that having in many respects remained in the seventeenth century till the end of the nineteenth they are now able to jump straight into the twentieth, not to say the twenty-first. For instance gas has never been used as an illuminant. In nothing is this aspiration stronger than in educational matters, and though great varieties of method are allowed and even encouraged, every effort is made to adopt the very latest educational theories.

This makes very great demands on the teachers and the standard of efficiency amongst these is undoubtedly low, though, what I suppose most modern educationalists would consider more important, the standard of enthusiasm is as undoubtedly high. Of what is actually being achieved I have very little idea, but I feel sure that in this matter, even more than others, it is extremely important to remember the inveterate habit of the Russian of taking the will for the deed. They simply love making plans and having constructed a thoroughly satisfactory plan, "that's that." It is said that in the year 1918 there was in Moscow a large building that bore an enormous sign stating that it was the home of the "Commission for the Electrification of All Russia"; on the door was pinned a small notice "Please knock, as the bell doesn't work."

To what extent the pupils learning under the Dalton plan and the Complex System are actually learning to read and write I do not know, and I certainly am not prepared to assume that all is well from the fact that the whole system is intensely alive. The ordinary complaint is that the children learn nothing and that there is no discipline at all; but as this is the stock complaint against all "advanced" schools all the world over I do not pay a great deal of attention to it.

A very much better idea than I can give may be obtained from that remarkable book *The Diary of a Communist Schoolboy*, which has recently been translated into English. This is evidently by a man who knows his subject thoroughly from the inside, and by no means gives to one living in Russia the impression of exaggeration that it apparently does to most Englishmen.

With regard to adult education I can speak with more assurance, as I have been continuously engaged in it since the autumn of 1923. Going back a little further I have been told by a lady who taught English in Moscow all through the Revolution, that, during the worst years, she held classes in the University in which she had no books at all, only one pencil, her own, and nothing to write on except the newly-planed top of a desk. During this period she accepted work in the Military Academy because there they paid a pound of black bread, cash down, for about three hours work a day, with a bonus of two salt herrings a week. Even in 1923, when things had improved out of all knowledge, it was a continuous source of amazement to me that education should be carried on at all under the conditions that I found ; but that it should have been carried on continuously through " the hunger years " seems to me to be a most

remarkable testimony to the enthusiasm for education that is one of the most striking characteristics of post-Revolution Russia.

Perhaps the best idea that I can give of the change that has come over Russia during the last five years will be to give some account of my connection with the Institute of Oriental Studies. In England this would probably be simply a Faculty of the University, but in Moscow a great deal of specialized work is carried on in independent Institutes. In this place Russians are educated in Oriental knowledge with the purpose of fitting them for diplomatic or commercial work in the East. Those learning Chinese, Japanese or Hindu have to take English as a second language, and it is in teaching this English that I have been employed.

When I first went there in October, 1923, the Institute was housed in a most unsuitable building that might perhaps have provided adequate accommodation for about a quarter of the students that were then attending. I used to arrive a few minutes before the time of my lesson and wait in the entrance hall till some of my students appeared. We then used to search the building for a vacant room. Sometimes, but very seldom, it would be one of the regular class-rooms. Sometimes it would be the Rector's " private " room. Frequently

it would be a corner of the dining-room. I never actually taught in the kitchen, but it was not unknown to have classes even there. The next thing to do was to get an electric light globe to put into the fitting. Nominally these could be obtained from the porter, but as there were never enough of them to go round it generally meant a protracted argument to get one out of him. Having settled down, the rest of my students would dribble in anything up to an hour late. Generally we got about two-thirds of the ninety-minute period for serious work. Now at this time there was an organization called the League of Time, the object of which was to cure Russians of their unpunctual habits and which had a large number of enthusiastic members, for no one is more conscious of the national failing than they are. One day the only student who had ever been reasonably punctual and regular turned up three-quarters of an hour late, remarking, as he came in, " Excuse me please that I am late, but I have been to a meeting of the League of Time." I may mention that it did not occur to any of the class that this was an amusing remark until they noticed that I was laughing.

During this period the class had no books, but I got a friend of mine to contribute to the cause of Russian education by sending me ten

copies of the *Weekly Manchester Guardian* each week. I was paid seventy kopeks (about one shilling and fourpence) an hour but could get the dinner provided for the students for a very small sum, paid once a month. This consisted of a bowl of soup followed by a second course consisting of various things, but they only gave us meat about once a week. In order to make a satisfactory meal it was necessary to eat a considerable quantity of the black bread that was provided *ad lib.* The utensils we were given were a tin bowl and, if you were lucky, a spoon. On the rare occasions that we got a piece of meat I used to use my pocket-knife to cut it up, and I must say that eating meat with a pocket-knife and a spoon is definitely below the very moderate standard of civilization that I feel to be necessary to a self-respecting individual.

I cannot say that I ever felt that any work I was able to do under these conditions was of much value. Nevertheless one of my pupils, who that year completed his three-year course in Japanese, was able to take up a position as "Reference" in the Intelligence Department of the Military Staff. That is to say he had, day by day, to read all the most important of the Japanese newspapers and be able to supply such information on the Japanese press as his chiefs from time to time desired. I should

When we come to speak of the character of the students we enter on a very large and, from the point of view of the Revolution, a very important question. As the intelligentsia forms in every nation a distinct class, this class must according to Marxian theory be destroyed. Now it is easy enough to destroy the capitalist class by simply expropriating them ; but you cannot expropriate the intelligentsia. This has not led the Bolsheviks to abandon the attempt to obliterate the class, but it has led to their attack on the intelligentsia, *quâ* class, being particularly ruthless. This should be remembered when we hear of those hardships of the former intelligentsia that have excited so much sympathy in England. To say that the hardships inflicted on this class have in many cases been terrible is undeniable, but to say that this persecution has been inspired by a blind hatred of intellect or by wanton cruelty would be as far from the truth as possible. It is part of a perfectly deliberate campaign to produce an educated nation as opposed to a nation with a small intellectual caste, which largely preserves its position of privilege from generation to generation, regardless of the mental capacity of its members. That the ideal aimed at is not a worthy one few will maintain. That some of the means adopted to attain the ideal have been not only

terrible in themselves, but ill-calculated to produce the results aimed at, I for one am not prepared to deny.

How difficult the problem is, is shown by our total failure in England even to begin to solve it by means of the educational ladder. It is, I think, the universal complaint of those who have the cause of higher education of the working classes at heart, that when an individual has by means of exceptional ability and perseverance succeeded in ascending the said ladder he almost invariably becomes not an educated working man, but simply a new member of the intelligentsia. How far the extremely ruthless methods adopted in Russia will attain their end, and how far they will merely result in producing a new class differing in no essentials from the old, it is yet far too soon to say, but I certainly know a good many members of the " new intelligentsia " who are living and doing good work under material conditions that no English working man would tolerate.

All the time that I have been teaching in Moscow I have only had students who were in their third or subsequent years. Thus it happened that the students that I was teaching in 1923 had been admitted to the Institute in 1920. It is hardly necessary to say that they had not received a sound secondary education

during the first years of the Revolution. As a matter of fact they were nearly all of them the children of the old intelligentsia who had somehow managed to camouflage themselves sufficiently to gain admission and who had somehow succeeded in surviving the very drastic "cleanings" that were then being carried on, in order to purge the Universities of all bourgeois taint. From the year 1921 onwards, the students admitted were selected more and more on what may be termed political grounds, and less and less on intellectual. Every effort was made to ensure that all of the very inadequate number of places available should be awarded to the children of genuine "workers." This movement culminated in the year 1925, after which these methods were considerably relaxed, as it was found that a large proportion of the students so admitted were not able to profit by a higher education. In the year 1926 a severe entrance examination was imposed in all Universities and Institutes; and since then the intellectual standard for admission has been progressively raised. As the last students I have taught were some of those admitted in the year 1925, I cannot speak of the effects of this change, but to say that I found these students satisfactory would be far from true. I should not say that they were inferior to their predecessors

in intellectual ability, certainly not so to any marked extent, but they were certainly very inferior to them in learning capacity. Their lack of cultural background showed itself most markedly in the difficulty they found in assimilating new knowledge. This was even more marked in the Institute than with the very similar group that I had at the University. This I attribute largely to the fact that the methods of study of an Oriental language are of necessity very different from the methods best calculated to produce good results in the study of English. These students being in general unaccustomed to the assimilation of knowledge, and having with infinite pains learnt how to acquire a knowledge of Chinese ideographs, were quite unable to adapt themselves to the entirely different methods necessary to obtain a working knowledge of English.

Another extremely interesting institution in which I have been teaching for the last two years is the RANION. Here is a barbaric word for which I have the greatest affection, for I suffer from what the theologians term "invincible ignorance" as to the full title, which consists of six Russian words, each more difficult than the last. This is an institution for post-graduate work in "Arts" subjects. My work here has been fairly elementary, as the standard aimed at is merely that of

enabling the students to read English books in their own special subject, but the work has been really enjoyable, for my classes have consisted of most delightful and interesting people, whose general intellectual standard was superior to that of any other classes that I have ever encountered. It is, I believe, extremely difficult to get into this institution, though very few of the students receive any stipend, and I find it difficult to believe that any other educational institution in the world has a higher standard of intellectual ability. That the standard of attainment is not so high need not surprise us when we remember the enormous difficulties that have had to be overcome during the last few years by anyone seeking real education.

Generally speaking it may be said that the standard of University education is at present low in Russia, and must continue to be so until the secondary schools have reached a level of efficiency which enables them to produce students up to University standard. This, of course, in its turn depends on the primary schools. How great the difficulties are that must be overcome before this point is reached, may be judged from the fact that they need a million elementary school teachers before they can complete their programme for the provision of primary schools. There are

always a certain number of people everywhere who, like Cobbett for instance, will get an education whether or not the means thereto are provided ; and I should expect that the proportion of such people is higher in Russia than elsewhere. I do not think that the higher schools are likely ever to be without a certain number of good pupils, but it is starting at the wrong end to expect the Universities to be in a really satisfactory or healthy state for many years to come.

Another great feature of Moscow education is the " Courses." These are held in every conceivable subject, from trimming hats, to foreign languages. All but a very few are in private hands and I suspect that many of them are rather worthless. I have experience of only two of these " Courses." The first I was connected with has an old pre-Revolution tradition behind it and is extremely well run. The pay is poor, but by making the work agreeable, and preserving an excellent spirit in the place, the organizers have managed to secure most of the best teachers in Moscow, and in consequence attract large numbers of pupils. The total number last year was about eight hundred, of whom just over four hundred were learning English ; just over three hundred German, and about seventy French. Very large numbers who join these Courses do not

complete them, many dropping out after a week or two and a good many more before the end of the first year ; of those who begin the second year the majority complete the four years' Course. The fees they pay depend on their own or their parents' income, the minimum being about twelve shillings a month. Twenty-five per cent of the places must, by law, be free and at the disposal of the various Trade Unions, who select, to fill the places, such of their members as they consider suitable. Under these conditions it is necessary to start with very large classes if you wish to have the Courses on a sound financial basis. In spite of this fact the great majority of the students get a good working knowledge of English before they finish, though, as might be expected, they do not get enough practice in speaking the language, and their written work is better than their oral work. A large proportion of the pupils are the daughters of people holding fairly good situations, and are very much of the type that is usually associated with University Extension Lectures in England. Nevertheless the great majority of them are doing real serious work. In these Courses each student attends classes for from eight to fourteen hours a week. All the pupils are adults and about five per cent are men.

The second of the " Courses " that I have

worked in was started under the Education Department to supply the wants of those who already knew some language pretty well, and wished to attain to a higher standard than that aimed at in the ordinary Courses, the particular aim being to train competent translators not only from, but also into, the foreign language. The pupils in these Courses are mostly people who are earning their own living and the standard of the senior group is very high. It is too soon as yet to say whether they will be successful in achieving their very difficult objective, as the Courses have not been running for long, and the most advanced pupils have still two years of their Course before them. In any case teaching such intelligent and hardworking people is extremely pleasant work. In fact one may say in general that teaching in Russia is very enjoyable for those who like teaching at all, as the standard of intelligence is distinctly high. I should not say that on the whole Russian students work so hard as English ones, and they are certainly more casual in their attendance; but most of them seem to take an intelligent interest in what is going on when they do come. You never get the impression that the pupils are there from a stern sense of duty which so often makes teaching in England a weariness of the flesh.

One of the most interesting examples of the way in which the demand for education has come from below, and not been imposed from above, is the *Rabfacs* (Workers' Faculties). The formation of these was a spontaneous movement on the part of the workers which was afterwards adopted and fostered by the Education Department. The students in these are workers in the factories who are selected by their comrades as being likely to profit by educational opportunities; they are full-time students, but receive the pay they would be getting if they were still working in the factory. I believe this pay is provided by the Unions and not by the factories, but of this I am not sure. Unfortunately for me the only language that any of them teach at present is a little German, so that my efforts to have a part in this movement have not, as yet, succeeded. A considerable portion of my last year's class at the Institute already mentioned had received their preliminary training in their *Rabfacs*. These institutions will presumably ultimately disappear as their object is to give some sort of education to those who have missed the usual opportunities, and as the regular machinery expands they will become less and less needed. At present however they are very much alive, and are I believe doing excellent work up to a certain point.

EDUCATION

A subject that is very closely bound up with education, at any rate in Russia, is that of the Censorship and propaganda. Now in order to understand the Bolshevik position in these matters it is necessary to realize that they consider that they are in a state of war; they consider that the change from the time when half the nations of Europe were actively or passively practising intervention and encouraging civil war is only one of method and not one of objective. If we wish to compare Russia with England in this matter we must compare her not, as most people do, with pre-war England, but with England during the war. I say with the pre-war England because it seems to me to be a melancholy fact that Russia is not the only country in Europe where the "Areopagitica" has become discredited. How far the censorship was justified during the war and how far it defeated its own ends are matters on which people differ widely. My own opinion is that the evils which necessarily attach to a censorship are such that under no conditions can it be a good thing; and that it is just when the temptation to use it is strongest that it is most disastrous. I believe that the Bolsheviks would be far wiser to remove the censorship altogether and that they would in this way serve their own ends far more effectually. But is it reasonable to

expect them to do this when they have never known a condition of things without a censorship, while even in England we with our great traditions of freedom of speech and publication completely abandoned them during the war and are still so far from the mental attitude of those who first established our freedom? How much of the discussion of Communist propaganda in England pays even a lip service to the principles of Milton? I am convinced that if the attempts at Communist propaganda in England were left alone they would be absolutely innocuous, and that it is only the ill-judged interference of the powers that be, that have advertised them into a fictitious prominence, and given them whatever weight they possess. However many, if not most, people in England apparently do not agree with me on this point, so that I can hardly hope to carry my readers with me in what I have to say about the Russian censorship. I hope however they will try to bear in mind that I hold views on the subject that, at any rate before the war, were generally considered to be tenable.

I take it that the evil of a censorship lies chiefly, if not entirely, in the fact that it is always both stupid and obscurantist. If we can imagine such a thing as a perfectly intelligent censorship, one which never made a

mistake as to the effect a book would have on its readers, for instance one which never considered an idea was false because it was new, one which was never afraid of the truth, such a censorship might perhaps be a good, and not a bad, thing. Now I am far from claiming these virtues for the Russian censorship; but it does seem to me that it is far less stupid than our war-time censorship was, and far less obscurantist than one could expect. This I judge to be largely the result of conditions that are only temporary; if it maintained its present character for the next half-century I think the results would be absolutely disastrous; but I imagine that the Bolsheviks themselves regard it as a purely temporary measure designed to overcome certain definite evils, and that when the balance has been restored the censorship can safely be abolished. For they consider that on the "Intellectual Front" what they have to fight, all along the line, is not false doctrines so much as false assumptions. Now assumptions are far more powerful and far more difficult to fight than any doctrines, and the temptation to invoke the aid of a censorship in this warfare seems to me to be almost irresistible. The fact that in order to be effective in the task that has been imposed on it this censorship has got to go to the very root of the matter, ensures that

it will be as intelligent as it is humanly possible for a censorship to be. That it is not under existing conditions obscurantist is, I think, due to quite different causes. I may best illustrate my meaning by taking the example of how it works in the matter of historical knowledge. At the present time no history can be published in Russia that is not in strict accordance with Marx's doctrine of materialistic interpretation. Now one does not have to be a Marxian to feel that, though not the whole truth, this theory is one side of the truth, and that a side that has been very badly neglected in the past. So great has this neglect been that it is not a bad, but may be a good, thing that the whole energies of a brilliant school of historians should for a time be turned in this direction. If this preoccupation with one side of the truth lasted for fifty years, it would, as I say, be disastrous, for long before that period had elapsed it would have become a severe and negative restriction ; there is however plenty of positive work to be done on these lines by the present generation.

The censorship of books for use in the schools is very much more severe and as a necessary consequence more stupid. Until quite recently they have demanded that all books on almost every subject should have an amount of positive propaganda that I am sure must have

defeated its own ends by sickening the children of the whole thing. Lately this has evidently been realized, as the censorship has been very much relaxed, and as long as a book is not anti-revolutionary, and is free from what they consider false assumptions, it is allowed to pass, which seems to show that even a censor is capable of learning, at any rate if he is a Russian. Of this censorship I have some experience, as I have submitted a set of easy reading books to them, prepared by simplifying the English of well-known short stories. Many of those I submitted were rejected as having the wrong ideology. In many cases I found on consideration that they were based on assumptions that I myself do not hold, for example, that the ideal destiny for a working girl is to marry a young man with an expensive car, but in some cases I could find no sensible reason for their rejection; for instance to reject O. Henry's story of "Witches' Loaves" apparently on the grounds that the woman in the shop being a bourgeois must not be made to appear benevolent seems to me to be prejudiced. Nor does it seem to me intelligent to reject an excellent story of Jack London's for no reason that I can assign except that its title is "The God of his Fathers" and "God" is at present an "unseemly" word. It has from time to time afforded me

a certain satisfaction that the contracted title of this institution is GUS with the U pronounced long.

In what ways the censorship affects the publication of books apart from school books it is practically impossible to say, for of course if one can only see what is published one can never know what is suppressed. One thing must always be borne in mind, and that is that the censorship is a hundred per cent efficient. The present Government knows far too much about subterranean propaganda for it to be possible to "get past" them. The secret, like all great secrets, is simplicity itself when you know it. Nothing is easier than to run a secret printing press, but there are few things more difficult than to run a secret paper-mill. A Government that controls the paper supply can defy the subterranean agitator.

The only indication that I can give on this point is to tell of the sort of books that may be seen in the bookshops. Apparently the Russian depends for his light reading almost entirely on translations. There is no doubt in my mind that the best of all sellers at the present moment in Russia is Tarzan. Jack London is a good second. John Locke, though a trifle old-fashioned, is still a great favourite with the older intelligentsia, but there is, I

think, no notable Western author who does not circulate freely in translation. The Continental reputation of Bernard Shaw extends in full vigour to Moscow, but I doubt if he is very much read. The impression however steadily grows on one that light reading accounts for a very much smaller proportion of the whole than it does in England. You will find it very difficult to discover a bookshop in Moscow that has not got books on pure science, for instance, in the window. Books and pamphlets of propaganda are of course always in evidence.

A word must be added on the mechanism of publication. By far the largest number of books are published by the *Gosisdat* (the State Publishing Department) which is under the Commissariat of Education. Many of the other Commissariats, such as those of Health and Agriculture, have their own Publishing Departments. In addition there are several smaller publishing houses most, if not all, of which are, I believe, Trusts, that is to say the Government has a controlling voice in their direction.

The *Gosisdat* is by far the largest publishing organization in the world and until quite recently showed abundant evidence that it was too unwieldy to yield to any capacity for organization that could be brought to bear

on it. About a year ago a new head was appointed and since then there have been distinct indications that a better era had set in.

I have heard many bitter complaints from some of my colleagues and aquaintances of the treatment they had received from this institution, but my own relations with it have always been pleasant, if their methods of doing business have been a trifle casual. The rate of pay for work done compares not unfavourably with that of a good English publisher; original work receiving about £12 for six thousand words and editorial work about £10 for the same amount. The standard agreement provides for an edition of ten thousand; if more copies are printed each additional thousand is paid for at half the original rate. After five years the book becomes the absolute property of the *Gosisdat*.

Most Englishmen regard the censorship of the press as an example of the present tyranny. The Russian point of view has been admirably expressed by Lenin. "Freedom of the press! Oh yes! of course everyone wants freedom of the press; but what most people mean by the phrase is freedom for a man who can afford to own a newspaper to debauch the minds of those who can only afford to buy it."

Whether they are free or not, there can be

no question of the high standard of serious journalism that is maintained by the best Russian papers, nor of the frankness of the criticism of the present regime that the Communists allow themselves. (To what extent intelligent and constructive criticism is allowed to non-Communists I am not prepared to say.) One of my pupils translated for me an extremely amusing article describing how a violent attack on the Communists was circulated in typescript amongst a little circle of malcontents, who passed it fearfully from hand to hand, till at last one of them was caught reading it by his son—a member of the Young Communist League. Seeing that concealment was no longer possible the father said that he knew it was the boy's duty to denounce him, and that he must do his duty however painful it might be to him. To which the son replied, after glancing at the incriminating document, "Don't be silly! That's only Rykov's speech at the last Party Congress."

Chapter IX: Conclusion

THE question that I have been most frequently asked since I have been in England is as to the stability of the present regime. I do not feel that my opinion on this matter is of any particular value, as I have no sources of information beyond those usually possessed by the man in the street. But as nearly everyone I meet asks me I suppose I ought to make some attempt at a reply.

I may be wrong, but I feel convinced that if a plebiscite was taken of Moscow the result would be a very heavy majority in favour of the Government. In Leningrad it would be even larger, and this would apply to the industrial towns throughout the country. The great mass of the " workers " and most of the best and most vigorous of the younger intelligentsia feel that the Dictatorship is fighting their battles and governing in their interests. As one of my students once expressed it to me, " You must remember that it is *our* Russia that the secret police are defending." The

longer I live in Moscow the more convinced I become of the deep and widespread significance of this personal pronoun ; for the first time in history the common man feels that the country belongs to him, and not to a privileged class that are his masters. It was the town proletariat that put the Bolsheviks in power, it has been the town proletariat to which they have consistently turned for support in their difficulties. So far this support has never been denied, and I see no signs at all that it is weakening. Difficulties in plenty lie ahead of them, but I find it very hard to believe that there is anything ahead that can compare to the tremendous obstacles that they have successfully surmounted in the past. Such being the case I should say that, as far as the near future is concerned, there is no Government in Europe more firmly in the seat.

When we try to see farther and arrive at some conclusion about the ultimate position it is quite a different question, and I do not feel that I can do more than state the problem as I see it. Eighty-five per cent of the population of the Soviet Union are peasants and it is with the peasant that the future lies. It is five years since I was living with them, but I do not suppose that even in revolutionary Russia the peasant changes very materially

in five years. Now to the Russian peasant Government has always been an unmixed evil. It is only a few years since they stopped flogging him if he didn't pay his taxes. Nor were the evils he received from the Government compensated by any good. Let me take the example of bridges. Russia is an extremely well-watered country and practically every village has a river to cross in order to get to its market town. In the winter this is simple as the villagers cross on the ice. When the spring comes the river becomes a raging torrent and communication is cut off with the outside world ; when the waters have fallen some sort of a ferry is generally rigged up and they can more or less communicate with their neighbours. It is not till the river has resumed its summer aspect that a bridge is built and the normal life of the village is once more restored. When the winter comes most of the timber that formed the rickety bridge is collected on the bank, the rest is swept away by the spring flood, and the whole process must start again. It is not that there is any difficulty in building bridges that will withstand the spring floods, but it is an expensive business and far beyond the resources of the village which lies nearest to the river and which is generally responsible for the temporary bridge. When I was working for the Quakers

CONCLUSION

I was at one time in charge of a district about the size of Middlesex and the only permanent bridges in the whole area were those that were specially built for the occasion when the Czar drove down to the Uralsk and had to pass through the district.

The peasant as I knew him grumbled incessantly against the Government, but after all it wasn't any worse than any other Government. It certainly taxed him, but so did they all. For some inscrutable reason there had to be a Government which would always interfere with him, instead of allowing him to get on with his job of growing his food, with a little surplus to buy tools. Anything was better than the constant changes of the Civil War, because as each new Government swept over the country it not only taxed him but commandeered his horse, leaving perhaps a worthless beast in its place. Now that the people called Communists were in power, they had better stop there ; at any rate they didn't try to take away the land that he had seized for himself, as Denikin had tried. To imagine that any good could come out of a Government was altogether outside his horizon. Why then should he try to substitute one Government for another ?

Obviously as long as this frame of mind is the predominant one, any party that can be

sure of steady support apart from the peasants can rule Russia as long as it does not oppress the peasant beyond the point that he is prepared to endure. The Bolsheviks however are trying by all the means in their power to convince the peasant that Government may be a good thing. It would hardly be an exaggeration to say that this is the sole object of educational work on the countryside. Wherever possible the local authorities are building bridges. Village after village is being electrified ; and it is the poor peasant and not the rich one, who first gets the fascinating toy of an electric switch in his house. An ever-expanding system of credit banks is helping him through the successive stages of owning first a cow and then a horse, of replacing the wooden plough of his fathers by an iron one.

People who profess to know are saying that this propaganda is already bearing fruit and that the peasant is rapidly becoming conscious of the fact that it is his part to direct and not merely to endure. When he reaches the point of considering that it is worth while to choose his own Government, he will do so. An unscrupulous dictatorship might be able to postpone the day; nothing could avert it. The Bolsheviks for all their doctrinaire obsessions have shown themselves remarkably able to adapt themselves to the facts. Will they

be able to adapt themselves to the conditions that will arise when the peasant, under their guidance, becomes "politically conscious"? I for one am not prepared to hazard a conjecture.

The second question that nearly everyone I meet asks me is whether I like living in Russia. The answer, as my readers may have gathered, is in the affirmative. If I am pressed further and asked "Why?" I find it more difficult to give satisfactory reasons. I suppose the chief reason is that Russia is a free country, the only free country I have ever lived in. Most people will tell you that England is a free country for the extraordinary reason that you are at liberty to make political or religious orations at the Marble Arch. You are also at liberty to wear a top hat and to treat everyone else in the same railway compartment as an enemy. As I have not the smallest desire to do any of these things I do not see that the fact that they are permissible constitutes personal freedom, as far as I am concerned. I may be a degenerate scion of my Puritan ancestors, but I must confess that my idea of a free country is one in which you can earn your living, otherwise than as a manual labourer, without having to wear a collar and tie, and where you can go to bed and get up when you want to and not when

other people think you ought to. In Russia you enjoy an exceptional degree of freedom in the things that really matter, that is to say in the details of your daily life. In England there is hardly any detail so trivial that somebody won't think it his duty to interfere with you about it.

Perhaps the next most important reason is that in Russia you are living in an atmosphere of hope. As to whether this hope is well or ill founded opinions differ widely; as to the fact that it exists there can be no difference of opinion. Both England and Russia have very serious "Unemployment" problems; but though I have discussed the English problem with a number of people this summer I have yet to meet one who is really hopeful about it. Those who consider that the problem is soluble, if the right steps were taken, seem to be the least hopeful of all. In Russia, on the other hand, I should say that the great majority of the people I meet are not only hopeful but confident that their difficulties are merely temporary and that they have already "turned the corner." I should say that this is the outstanding difference between the political situation in the two countries, and I should further say that it is this hopefulness, more than anything else, that provides the Communists with the tremendous driving

force of which they have given such ample evidence.

Next I would mention the complete social equality that one finds in Russia. This does not mean that some people are not much better off than others, but it does mean that this difference does not affect their social relations. It is natural to find most of your friends amongst those who are doing more or less similar work to yourself, as you are more likely to have common interests with such people than with those whose work is widely different from your own. When to this limitation is added, as in England, that you must find your friends amongst those who are making approximately the same income and living in the same sort of house as yourself, the circle becomes somewhat narrow. Moreover, when you try to step outside these limits and enter upon a purely human relationship with a member of a class " above " or " below " your own you find a barrier raised, not consciously indeed, but instinctively, either by yourself or the other man, which very few people have the gift to surmount. To what extent these barriers ever existed in Russia I do not know, but in post-Revolution Russia they do not exist at all ; on the economic plane the Marxian ideal of a classless society may still be a thing of the future, but on the

social side it has been realized to an extent that is wonderfully refreshing to any Englishman of democratic aspirations. Another barrier to human intercourse that is notably absent in Russia is that caused by the habit, so common amongst the middle classes in England, of trying to pretend you are a different sort of person from the one that God made you. No Russian that I have ever met has shown the smallest desire to persuade me that he is different from what he really is, or to assign motives to himself because he has thought that I should consider them worthy ones.

But perhaps the last reason that I will mention should really have been placed first. I should strongly recommend anyone who suffers from chronic "Wanderlust" to try living in Moscow. For though life there is often uncomfortable and sometimes unpleasant, it is never dull.

THE END