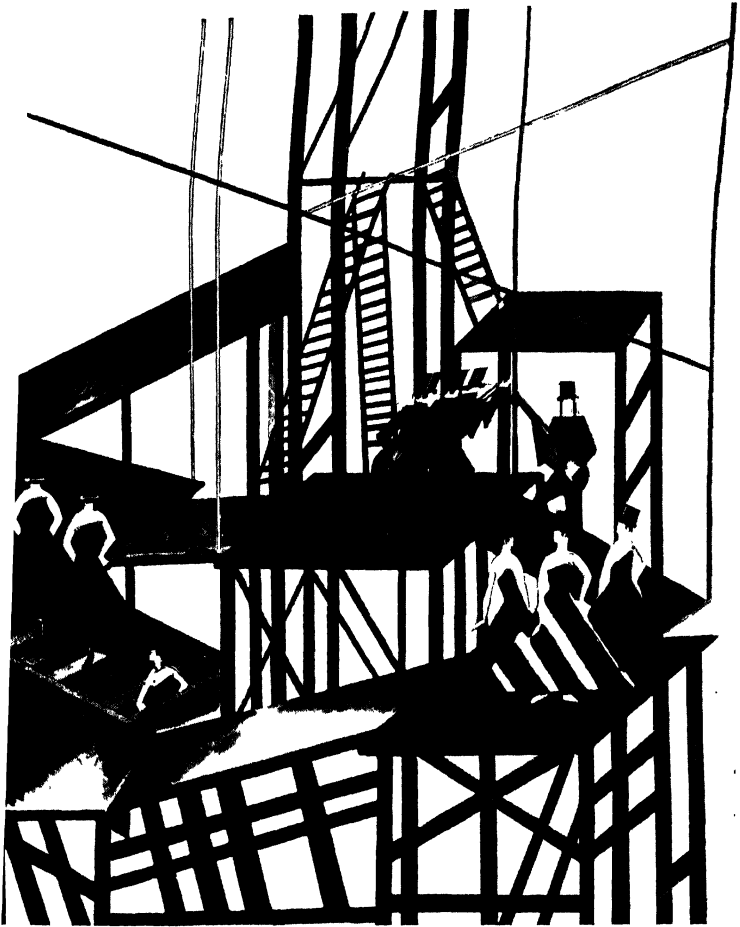


ENCLOSURE



THE AGE OF CONSTRUCTIVE-SYNTHESIS IN THE NEW RUSSIAN THEATRE

A vertical construction by Alexandra Exter of the Moscow State Kamerny theatre. It is designed to serve the significant rhythmic emotion contained by a play, and is demanded by dynamic representation and interpretation. It suggests the transition from neo-realism to concrete realism and shows the use of colour. See Appendix 7.

THE NEW SPIRIT IN THE RUSSIAN THEATRE 1917-28.

AND A SKETCH OF THE RUSSIAN KINEMA AND
RADIO 1919-28, SHOWING THE NEW COMMUNAL
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE THREE.

By
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"The New Theatre of Max Reinhardt."
The New Theatre and Cinema of Soviet Russia (1917-23)."
"The New Spirit in the European Drama (1914-25)."*

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CONTENTS TABLE

PART I

PROCESS A. PLANNING THE THEATRE

CHAP.	PAGE
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS - - - - -	ix
I CONCEPTION - - - - -	3
Vision of a Social theatre with a vital function to fulfil for the Russian people.	
II MATERIAL - - - - -	8
Short history of the influences, political, economic and social, on the New theatre from earliest time to 1917.	
III MATERIAL (CONTINUED) - - - - -	18
Sketch of the contemporary influences, philosophical, military, political, economic and social, on the New theatre since 1917.	

PART II

PROCESS B. BUILDING THE THEATRE

1917-22.

IV FORGING THE NEW TOOL - - - - -	27
(a) Nationalisation. (b) Organisation.	
(c) Rationalisation. (d) Subsidisation.	
V THE BUILDERS. THEORETICAL - - - - -	34
The social theatre idea. Its early mass form discussed and disseminated by Government and Labour leaders. Its wide circulation in little journals.	
VI THE BUILDERS. PRACTICAL - - - - -	37
Master Builders. The Big Five: Their careers, concepts, policies, methods and achievements. (a) Lunacharski. (b) Meierhold. (c) Tairov. (d) Granovski. (e) Stanislavski.	
VII THE BUILDERS. PRACTICAL (CONTINUED) -	115
The Three Groups formed during 1918-22.	

CONTENTS TABLE

CHAP.	PAGE
VIII 1. THE LEFT GROUP - - - - -	117
A. Large Organisations. (1) Lesser Leaders. (2) Proletcult theatre.	
B. Small Organisations. (1) Little Mass theatre. (2) Big Mass theatre. (3) Sum- mary of Proletcult section. (4) Little theatres of Satire and Experiment :—(a) Foregger. (b) Crooked Jimmy. (c) Sem- perant. (d) Travelling Theatre.	
2. CENTRE GROUP	
A. State theatres :—(1) Plays. (2) Operas. (3) State Children's theatre. (4) Circus.	
B. Right Centre :—(1) The Old Jewish theatre (Habima).	
3. RIGHT	
(1) Moscow Art theatre studios. (2) The N.E.P. Group :—(a) The Korsh theatre. (b) The Ermitage Group.	

PART III

PROCESS C. COMPLETING THE THEATRE
1923-28.

FIRST PHASE OF STABILITY

INTELLECTUAL CONDUCT OF THE THEATRE

IX 1. POLICY - - - - -	195
Political, economic and social changes. Cor- responding changes in theatrical policy, organisation and achievement. (1) Policy. (2) Organisation.	
X THE MASTER BUILDERS - - - - -	203
Their new material. The ideology of the new society. Analysis of this material. (1) The Subject. (2) The Materialistic ideology. (3) Illustration. (4) Execution.	
XI THEIR ACHIEVEMENT - - - - -	209
Review of plays and evolving technique. Con- structive synthesis replaces æsthetic synthesis. (A) Meierhold, 1923-28. (B) Tairov. (C) Granovski. (D) Lunacharski : (1) Opera. (2) Little theatre. (3) Children's State theatre. (4) Right Centre : (a) Jewish theatre. (b) Vakhtangov theatre. (c) Theatre of Satire. (d) Sem- perant. (E) Stanislavski : (1) Moscow Art Academic theatre. (2) M.A.T. Studios :—(a) 2nd Art Academic theatre. (b) Musical Studio. (c) C. S. Stanislavski Opera Studio.	

CONTENTS TABLE

vii

THE SECOND PHASE OF STABILITY

THE PROLETARIAN CONDUCT OF THE THEATRE

CHAP.		PAGE
XII	THE MASS BEHIND THE THEATRE - Analysis of changes, and of Left contributions to the expression of the ideological content.	254
XIII	THE LESSER BUILDERS' ACHIEVEMENT - The Lesser Builders. (1) Proletcult theatre. (2) Theatre of Revolution. (3) Trades Union Dramatic theatre. (4) Mass theatre. (5) Blue Blouse. (6) Tram theatre.	256

PART IV

PROCESS D. THE COMPLETE THEATRE

THIRD PHASE OF STABILITY

THE THEATRE TO-DAY

XIV	WINTER 1926-27 - - - - - The theatre continues to follow current events. The events and theatrical tendencies analysed.	265
XV	SUMMER AND AUTUMN 1927 - - - A fresh period of unrest begins with the "Break."	266
XVI	WINTER 1927 - - - - - The November Celebrations. The balance of ten years' gains and losses.	267
XVII	BRIEF REVIEW OF 1928 - - - -	269

PROCESS E. THE THEATRE OF TO-MORROW

FOURTH PHASE OF STABILITY

XVIII	1. IMMEDIATE - - - - -	271
	2. FUTURE	

CONTENTS TABLE

PART V
THE TWO AUXILIARIES

A. THE KINEMA

B. THE RADIO

CHAP.		PAGE
XIX	THE KINEMA - - - - -	277
	The Mechanical Age of the Theatre and the Mechanical Peril. Need of unity of mechanical instruments of social and cultural expression. Unity in Russia. Concept. Policy. Motive. Organisation. Content. Method, etc. Achievement, etc.	
XX	RADIO - - - - -	292
	Radio and National unity. Concept. Policy. Motive. Method. Organisation. Achievement, etc.	
XXI	SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS - - - - -	296

PART VI

		PAGE
APPENDICES - - - - -		305
	1. Bibliography and list of "theatrical" visitors to Russia.	
	2. Lists of plays since 1917, in chronological order.	
	3. Extension of bolshevist cultural activities in Europe and America :—	
	A. The new touring companies.	
	B. "The Intellectual Front Against Reaction" and the new fashion in bolshevist films and theatrical innovations.	
	C. Films :	
	1. Bolshevist distributing agencies in and out of Russia.	
	2. Lists of bolshevist films distributed and exhibited in England, Europe and America.	
	4. Extension of the bolshevist theatrical system in the East. List of theatres.	
	5. English influences on Russian classics in favour with the bolsheviks.	
	6. Bolshevist influences on the English, European and American theatres.	
	7. A note on the illustrations and the present use of colour in the Russian theatre.	
	8. A note on the present-day hopeless confusion in words and technical terms, to which bolshevist Russia has contributed.	
	9. A note on the theatre tendency to-day that we must study.	
	10. Acknowledgments.	

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

THE AGE OF CONSTRUCTIVE-SYNTHESIS IN THE NEW RUSSIAN

THEATRE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<i>Frontispiece</i>
								FACING PAGE
" DEATH OF PAZUHINA "	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10
" 200,000 "	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	38
ALICE KOONEN	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	54
" STORM "	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	64
" THE DAY OF THE TURBINS "	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	68
" THE ARMoured TRAIN "	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	76
" THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO "	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	88
" ANTIGONE "	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	104
HENRIETTE PASCAR	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	118
" THE DAY OF THE TURBIN FAMILY "	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	138
" ROAR, CHINA ! "	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	154
" NUTCRACKER "	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	174
A. M. GRANOVSKI	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	210
" REVIZOR "	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	212
" REVIZOR "	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	218
" TEACHER BUBUS "	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	224
" A WINDOW IN THE COUNTRY "	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	230
" DESIRE UNDER THE ELMS "	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	234
" ROZITA "	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	240
" HAIRY APE "	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	244
" A NIGHT IN THE OLD MARKET "	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	248
" A NIGHT IN THE OLD MARKET "	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	252

PREFACE

WHY THE BOOK WAS WRITTEN

My Faith in the Theatre.

I believe in the Theatre as a medium for the redemption of man from evil, and for the attainment of the ultimate good of society. It is a medium perhaps greater than the Church. It may probably supersede it.

I think the present-day Theatre is changing for the better.

The cultural feature of the moment is the gradual destruction of the old form of Theatre and the creation of a new one.

To this end new mechanical contrivances are contributing.

This feature has strengthened my faith in the theatre and partly realised my theory of it.

For a long time I have been working out a theory of a new form of Theatre that shall replace the old one. The term Theatre is here meant to include the drama. Actually the two are inseparable.

I have stated my theory in successive books and a continuous stream of articles, which together provide an analysis and synthesis of the new Theatre in the making. [In England, Europe and America books and articles have been appearing for some time, which show the influence of my work on writers on the theatre.]

They make an important contribution to the

contemporary history of the Theatre. As the outcome of pioneering they fill gaps in that history, suggest and open up new fields of investigation, and reveal the foundations together with the laws and principles which must determine and influence the new structure.

My credentials.

My qualification for the task is well known. A long experience of all sides of the Theatre, its theory and practice in this country and abroad, together with a very wide experience of human life in its many and varied aspects, philosophical, moral, religious, scientific, æsthetic, political, economic, social and so on, has equipped me to form a reasonable theory of the true relationship between the two. The theory that the Theatre is primarily an organic part of human life, and that it has a human and civilising function to fulfil for man.

My theory.

The business of the epoch is to re-establish that relationship.

Development of,
and support for
my position.

In searching for support for my theory, and the best and most convincing application of it I "discovered" the new Russian theatre.

In 1923, I published a book giving my experience and interpretation of that theatre as a whole as it appeared at the time collaborating with the Russian people in their endeavour to secure the first fruits of liberation as conceived by their leaders.

Its appearance was that of a human and liberating "tool" or "machine" fashioned by the mental and physical necessities of the people in accordance with the spirit of the epoch.

It was a "machine" inasmuch as it did not go beyond utilitarian needs, and was the outcome

of a "vision" and possessed the utilitarian attributes of a mechanistic age.

It was the temple of a people looking for God in man and not for God in heaven.

A book of books
on the contemporary
history of
the theatre.

Subsequently I published a large volume that applied my theory to a wider field. I had been collecting materials for it since 1914. It comprised a sketch of 13 European theatres changing under the touch of the new spirit or purpose which the War introduced to them. It was the purpose of living and thinking for man.

From 1914 to 1918 these theatres took an active part in the War.

My original intention was to complete each picture and publish it in the form of a separate book. Together they should form a series of pictures illustrating the theatres of Europe being transformed by political, military, economic and social events arranged in chronological order as they occurred during the ten eventful years.

A first book on
the Russian
theatre.

The delay in finding a publisher for the preliminary work led me to complete the picture of the Russian theatre first.

At the time I wrote the book the Russian theatre was in a state of transition. As a tool of popular expression it was but roughly fashioned, being in fact the product of Government and popular demand governed by unparalleled vicissitude and social instability. It was just emerging from chaos.

To the practiced eye it exhibited signs of the return of a function that has been missing from the theatre for four centuries. It exhibited a form obscured by the instability and confusion set up by the Revolution and after events, and a

new technique determined by militant, economic and social forces and circumstances.

But in spite of an air of crudity and barbarism produced by appalling experiences, it exhibited amazing new features about which no writer who lived for the advance of the Theatre could hesitate to tell the world.

It stated or re-stated the real problem of the Theatre in such a way that, as you could see, it must inevitably find the solution.

It invited a new standard of dramatic criticism, which alone sociologists possessed of the spirit of the epoch could apply.

It contained in itself the factor of unity-unity between one part of the Theatre and all others, and between the Theatre and human life—which makes for fulfilment of its function.

It said, though in a crude fashion at that time, that the Theatre rightly considered is a highly-sensitized instrument of representation and interpretation, by means of which man may play with, understand and illuminate his experiences in quest of a tolerable system of human life.

A play-space in which he may erect a working model of Heaven as he conceives it, peopled by righteous folk. As in the Middle Age the people played at building a moral world as they conceived it.

Reception of the
book.

The reception of the book was influenced by unusual circumstances. It was the first book on the new Russian theatre, one by the only English dramatic critic who had entered Russia since the Revolution. Its subject was unknown to English dramatic critics. They knew nothing about revolutionary Russia, nothing about the effect of

the Revolution on the theatre, and said so. To many of them Russia and its cultural institutions were suspect. They refused to believe that anything good could come out of an overturned country. Some were moved by the queer notion that any book containing first-hand information on Russia, published in 1923, must contain bolshevist propaganda. In these circumstances, and having no actual experience of the Russian theatre, nor the standard of criticism demanded by its nature, aims and achievement as explained by the book, they evaded the matter, the main thesis of the sketch, its principal arguments, and the illustration provided by the theatre, and concentrated on its manner. What they did was to use the alleged mis-spelling of Russian names, some slips of the pen, a number of misprints and blunders for which I was not responsible owing to the great haste and the peculiar circumstances governing the publication of the book, to assert that the theatre did not exist, except in my imagination, or, if it did exist, it was a monstrosity that a social revolution might be expected to create, or, that I was an ignoramus on all the larger matters of the history, theory and practice of the Theatre.

They used the real difficulty of spelling Russian names to please every pedant, real oversights in proof reading or reference due to haste, to attack the Russian theatre and to accuse me of attempting to foist an evil subject on the English public.

I was quite unmoved because I had had a similar experience years before when I introduced Picasso and other "revolutionary" painters and

ducers and critics, Continental tours of the best Russian theatrical companies, and perhaps most of all by the present crisis in the general Theatre itself produced by the rivalry of the kinema and radio.

A real crisis has arisen in the theatre of Western Europe and America, and the eyes of all who are seriously concerned with the immediate future of the Theatre are anxiously searching for a means to overcome it.

Prejudice which might oppose barriers to such a search are disappearing. Sceptics and the intelligentsia are beginning to see something good in the New theatre. So it emerges from the mist of suspicion which too long has obscured its real worth to offer its contribution to the solution to this great problem which presents itself. To-day have come the problems of the reflection by the Theatre of the spirit of the epoch and the unity of interpretation and intention of three mighty mediums of social expression, the Theatre, Kinema and Radio.

A new and hitherto unknown situation has arisen in the Theatre. There is a demand for a full statement of the situation and how it may be, or is being met. The Russian theatre is best fitted to be used for that purpose.

A statement of the present crisis in the world Theatre required.

To be made by means of the Russian theatre.

An up-to-date story of the idea, building and construction and work of the Russian theatre would then seem to be urgently necessary not only to suggest a way out of the present theatrical blind-alley, but to satisfy a very widespread curiosity concerning the paths it has taken since 1923 under five years of fairly calm construction and a brief period of unrest that began with the

diplomatic Break with Britain in the summer of 1927.

Difficulty of
the undertaking.

The preparation of a new book on the Russian theatre is bound to present many difficulties. Russia is still comparatively a closed country, rendered more difficult of access by the events of recent months. Information is hard to obtain even by those specially favoured. A visit to Russia is very costly and not without risks and discomfort. There exists very little material for the historical story of the present-day theatre. Since 1917 there has been no systematic attempt to compile records, and a good deal of valuable material contained in progressive periodicals and theatrical and club "house journals" of mushroom-like growth, has been destroyed. Only writers who, like myself, have entered Russia from time to time since 1917 and have systematically collected material for books on the theatre as a whole, can boast of being in a position to tell the complete story of the New theatre. The number of such writers is very limited. Probably there is only one—myself. I have not heard of another. By complete I mean every establishment engaged in theatrical work and not a small group of academic theatres only.

So, by complete story I mean complete in every detail, even to the idea, birth and growth of the Labour theatre in all its variety, and its close relationship to the academic section. The latter has found interpreters. They have dealt with its aims and intentions in a partial manner and without taking into account the very powerful Labour elements and their influences on its post-revolution development.

The Russian theatre is a comprehensive thing. It goes beyond middle-class needs.

The use of words
and terms.

A work of interpretation should attach importance to meaning. Words and terms should be handled to mean something, that something being their original intention as far as possible. As a writer I have always sought to follow that principle. I have paid attention to origin, definition and expression. But it is not easy in view of the verbal confusion produced by the Revolution.

In the present work I seek to use words and terms having a metaphysical and technical significance, as comprehensively and plainly as the present confusion in the domain of language admits.

The word "theatre" is made to stand for Drama and the drama.

Originally it meant Drama-space. Now it is walls and space, actually the technique of the drama since it comprises the visible objects and agents of interpretation and representation, as established by latter-day custom.

Again, there is only one Theatre. In it are many theatres, or playhouses. Just as the body is an engine composed of many engines. We are accustomed to use the word "theatre" very carelessly, so carelessly that but few persons know what the Theatre really is. Each country and indeed each city and town is given a theatre. There is the English theatre, the French theatre, the German theatre. Properly speaking and thinking there is only one Theatre. But it has a variety of forms.

To distinguish between the absolute (perhaps

it would be better to say, generic) Theatre and the local ones, I have spelt the first with a capital T.

Capitals are used also to make other distinctions.

Drama as I conceive it must be spelt with a capital D. The drama or form with a small one.

In making a word or term stand for a clear concept, idea or thought, I trust I have steered a steady course in expressing what is meant by the Theatre to-day.

ARGUMENT

THE RUSSIAN THEATRE ILLUSTRATES THE NEW SPIRIT IN THE THEATRE

The book deals with a revolution in the theatre which is not political, but the result of a conception of the theatre in accordance with the necessities of the epoch.

A new and great theatrical epoch has begun.

There exists a New Spirit (in the sense of purpose or function) in the Theatre.

This spirit is re-forging the Theatre as a new tool capable of helping to solve the new social problems that have presented themselves.

There exists a theatre and a mass of work conceived in this spirit. It is to be found in Russia (U.S.S.R.). Here the present-day theatre stands for the collective spirit of the age, especially the mass-production of the sentiment of liberty, mass social construction and synthesis guided by a clear conception of the social problem.

The theatre has liberated itself from custom.

It has acquired a style of its own, that is, a style in accordance with the collective necessities of the epoch. It is animated by a principle which determines and governs all the thought and action of the new epoch. This theatrical style is the result of the reflection of a general state of mind to which a reversal of the social order has given a special character.

The theatre has an history which unfolds itself slowly across the centuries as the growth and development of insurrectionary and revolutionary impulses, ideas and thought expressed alike by intellectuals and the Mass.

It has its own raw material both historical and contemporary, provided by the collective necessities and achievements in the past; the new philosophy, collective necessities, especially social and economic reconstruction, industrial and engineering production, the forging of new tools belonging to the new epoch.

It has a new plan dictated by the collective necessities of the epoch. Its problem has been definitely stated.

It has gone through the stages of building and construction.

It is now nearing completion as an up-to-date tool or instrument of communication, social construction and synthesis.

It has reached a new crisis. It will reach completion in harmony with two new tools of human and social expression, the kinema and radio.

It will be re-forged from time to time in accordance with the evolutionary-revolutionary changes of successive epochs.

PART I. (POLICY)

PLANNING THE NEW THEATRE

CHAPTER I

A. CONCEPTION

ELEVEN years ago a social revolution broke out in Russia. It had two distinct phases. There was the March or All-Russia revolution. The Tsar was deposed, and a Provisional Government established under Kerenski. And there was the October (November, new calendar), or bolshevist revolution during which all power passed rapidly into the hands of Soviets according to the plan of Lenin and his associates.

Since then a New theatre (that is to say, a theatre with a new purpose) has been definitely established by experiment. For there was no exact model of the theatre required, and only by experiment could the original intention of those who conceived and organised the theatre—the intention of establishing a real emotional and utilitarian relationship between the theatre and the mass of the people—be realised. It is true there existed a standard fixed by the Middle Age. Also it is true that the Russian masses had not, till the Revolution came, emerged from the Middle Age. They had missed the Renaissance and subsequent individualising influences and had remained more or less herd-like.

But the theatre required by the new epoch could not operate altogether in the Middle Age way. It must be a product of the spirit of the epoch. It must be the outcome of adaptation to the new principles of economic and social life. Though it could and has, in fact, retained the collective character of the early theatre, though it could form and has formed a playground for the exercise of the collective play-spirit, the moment demanded that the standard of collaboration must be a matter

4 THE NEW SPIRIT IN THE RUSSIAN THEATRE

of logic, analysis and synthesis in accord with the spirit of the age.

This theatre then exhibits a new purpose. It fulfils a vital function similar to, but far more developed, than that now manifested by some of the theatres outside Russia.

It rests upon an old-new idea, is governed by principles, pursues a policy, is actuated by a motive, and applies a method that are different from, and in some respects newer than, those of the Western European and American theatres.

The primary aim of this book is to make an analysis and synthesis of the New theatre. It also advances a thesis and uses the Russian theatre to illustrate it. The thesis, simply put, is that the Theatre (the term includes the drama) when fulfilling its true vital function is an indispensable and inseparable part of the social organism. And its particular function to-day is to interpret the new and practical sociology which is a feature of present-day Society.

(A). CONCEPTION.

Though the New theatre has an historical origin, it was largely determined by the nature and aims of the October revolution, and the peculiar needs of the Government and the people. The revolution was social and economic, unlike the French revolution which was essentially political. The latter aimed at the abolition of one form of State and the substitution of another. The former aimed at the abolition of an oppressive political and autocratical system, and of the State, and the substitution of a soviet form of government and society. Moreover, it aimed to replace social democratic institutions by a dictatorship called the dictatorship of the proletariat.

These distinctions are necessary if we wish to understand the unusual social foundations of the New Russian theatre. The Revolution required that every cultural institution should serve it, not only as a fighting weapon but as a means to its end in the establishment of a communal society.

That circumstance no doubt led the Russian Government

to conceive the new purpose of the Russian theatre. They recognised the importance of the theatre to the Revolution, as other Governments had recognised, partially or fully, the importance of their theatres to the aims of the war. Beyond this, the Russian Government recognised its importance to the new society in the making. They saw it was capable of participating in the task of the realisation of Russian bolshevism and its political, economic, cultural and social ideals, and of making known the ideology of the new society.

From the first they were agreed that it could be used to take part in the following stages of the revolutionary movement:

1. The conquest of power and its military defence. The propagation of the dictatorship of the proletariat, its conditions, its establishment, and its consolidation. To serve military purposes.
2. Economic reconstruction and construction and their developments. Education in industrialism and the scientific construction of society and its environment.
3. The promotion of culture and its spread among the Mass.

IDEA.

The outstanding idea that actuated the Government in their attitude towards the theatre may be said to be the appeal to the craving for liberty possessed by the many millions in Russia. They saw the great power of the theatre to make the appeal.

The basic idea of liberation has operated in the New theatre throughout.

It has put the latest struggle by the Russian people for liberty on the stage, and it has shown the struggle of the theatre for liberty from tradition necessary to express the phases of the people's struggle for liberty.

The theatre was conceived as an up-to-date tool of expres-

6 THE NEW SPIRIT IN THE RUSSIAN THEATRE

sion for All. As a medium of mass-production of the sentiment of liberty.

Thus conceived it was to reflect two movements—social liberation as understood by the bolshevist leaders, and the birth, growth and development of a new mass community that should enjoy more liberty than the old individualistic one. That is, the pre-revolution community under individualistic government.

The movement towards a mass community was really one of the many and varied present-day schemes—mystical, metaphysical, theological, æsthetic, materialistic, and so on—for the betterment of human society in a national or international sense, for the redemption of man, and for the attainment of the enjoyment of the richness and fullness of existence on earth,—now occupying the attention of Utopians of all sorts.

The feature of the age is the planning of a new heaven and government on earth or in some other locality.

THEORY.

Hence the Government theory that the theatre is a national and popular institution capable at moments of great crises, such as the Revolution, of serving as a powerful instrument of propaganda, agitation and education.

POLICY.

Hence the policy to use the theatre to fight for Russia and to help to reconstruct it. To instruct and enlighten the people in new social ideas and values. To express a new ideology. That is a set of ideas produced by new social thought and action.

MOTIVE.

Hence the motive to crush all reactionary tendencies, all opposition to bolshevism, and to inspire confidence in the people in the Government by exalting the Mass where the individual had been.

METHOD.

Hence the method of making the theatre and people one, the theatre free to all, of mixing the people with the dramatic, militant and constructive action of the plays. No personality

but mass personality. No spectators but one spectator. No minds but a perception of bolshevist aims and end in collective liberty. The method gave birth to the Mass théâtre. The original plan of which however became modified as the limitations of the roofed-in theatre became apparent.

MODIFICATION.

The Government's conception of the theatre as a means to solve the political problems of a New Russia underwent modification as the popular conception, knowledge and control of the theatre grew. This conception produced by the comparatively free access to it was that the theatre was a space in which all could join in pursuit of stark liberty. The Will of the People gradually grew stronger than the Will of the Government till it came to impose itself upon the theatre, and to exclude politics in favour of economics. To the people the theatre was a place for putting their house in order.

The Russian theatre of to-morrow may show the effect of such modification.

CHAPTER II

B. HISTORICAL MATERIALS

B. MATERIALS.

I. HISTORICAL. A SHORT HISTORY OF THE INFLUENCES (FORCES AND CIRCUMSTANCES) ON THE NEW THEATRE PRIOR TO 1917.

(a) FEUDAL SEEDS

(b) POPULAR SEEDS

(c) COURT OR PROFESSIONAL SEEDS

(a) FEUDAL. MOTIVE, EXPRESSION OF THE PLAY SPIRIT.

The history of the Theatre unfolds itself slowly across the centuries as the utilisation of space, of human experience, of scenic structure and decoration.

If we say, of revolutionary expression, and of scenic structure and decoration of comparatively recent date, we are speaking of the history of the Russian theatre.

Though the New Russian theatre was mainly determined by the collective necessities of the October revolution, of the Government and the people, it may be said to have had a far-off mystical origin. Seeds were sown by primitive and deeply religious folk. Theatrical representations were the spontaneous outcome of the inner necessity of such folk. In Moscow there are theatrical museums containing models of early stages on which mystical, religious and improvised moralities were performed by primitive Russian communities. In early times the theatre exhibited an inner form of play action. Later it exhibited an external form of serf action. Plays were performed by serfs for the entertainment of their masters, the Russian landowners. Next it became an external form of peasant and worker-class action. In the latter form it was largely influenced by the idea

of liberation communicated to Russia by converts to the aspirations and principles of the French revolution. Then it fell under the influence of Marxism through the intellectuals transferring their allegiance to it. These Marxists made it their business to make known the importance of the feudal, now turned popular, theatre to the general revolutionary movement. Through them it became a definite instrument of systematic agitation, of mass canvassing on behalf of economic and revolutionary theories. These three forms of theatrical organisation then contributed to the New theatre spontaneous dramatic expression, communal dramatic expression, and the popular expression of mass liberty as conceived in the early eighteenth century. We can trace in them the roots of that theatricalisation of social life which came with the bolshevist revolution.

(b) COMMUNAL AND ECONOMIC. MODERN SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INSURRECTIONARY AND REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS IN RUSSIA PRIOR TO 1917. INFLUENCING THE GROWTH OF THEATRICAL ORGANISATIONS OF REVOLT.

A long period of increasing tension produced by the struggle, first of the peasants and their leaders, and then of the peasants and workers for legal, social and political liberty.

We see the peasants struggling for liberty, and remaining serfs till 1861, when they were emancipated legally but not politically or economically. They were promised the land but did not get it. As a result they were forced to work for their landlords and chained to their communes. Hence a series of dramatic insurrections providing motives for plays. In the early eighteenth century there was the comedy of the bid for liberty by passive resistance. Whole households and whole villages of serfs absconded. They were enticed back by concessions only to abscond again as tales reached them of the free life which could be enjoyed in Poland, or on the steppes. More serious risings were evoked by the cruelty of landowners and their stewards, and in consequence troops were kept busy in conflict with rebels

10 THE NEW SPIRIT IN THE RUSSIAN THEATRE

everywhere. There was a guerilla warfare which later blazed up in the classic Pugatchev insurrection.

The two classic peasant insurrections that have been accepted by the Bolsheviks as good propaganda are those led by Stenka Razin and Pugatchev. The latter was the leader of the peasant revolt in the reign of Catherine II. The historical series of peasant revolts culminated in the All-Russia rising in 1905. The incidents of this struggle make a contribution to the class-struggle content of the New theatre.

(c) POLITICAL AND SOCIAL DEMOCRACY. MODERN POLITICAL AND REVOLUTIONARY THOUGHT AND MOVEMENT IN RUSSIA PRIOR TO 1917.

A long struggle for political and social liberty contributed materially to the intent and content of the New theatre. The struggle was fed by three revolutionary events each of which made its own contribution to the theatre. From France came ideas of a dramatic mass struggle for political liberty as expressed by the French revolution. From Germany came the Marxian idea of the mass struggle for social freedom, and the dramatic technique of class-struggle. From England, the Darwinian idea of the material evolution of man with its contribution to the great transitional period of secularism of which Bolshevik Russia is the latest development. Two books, Marx's "Capital" and Darwin's "Origin," greatly influenced evolutionary-revolutionary thought of the nineteenth century. Both were highly dramatic. The one rested on the thesis of man unfolding to a higher level under the pressure of natural selection; the other of the Mass unfolding under the pressure of economic forces and circumstances. Each had a highly dramatic technique, one the struggle for existence, the other the mass-struggle for liberty.

The effect of the revolutionary thesis appeared in nihilistic and popular insurrectionary activities. Russian socialism in the nineteenth century was first influenced by the French revolution which manifested itself in the Narodnaia Volia activities, and the Decembrist revolt in the time of Alexander 1st, Grand Duke



“ DEATH OF PAZUHINA ”

By M. E. Saltykov-Shchedrin, at the Alexandrina theatre, Leningrad. A Cubo-Futurist production showing the influence of the Left Wing theatre on the old Imperial theatres. The “ decorations ” are by M. E. Pavlov.

Constantine and Nicholas 1st. The intelligentsia in search of political liberty accepted socialism upon a theoretical basis of materialism. They transferred their allegiance to the emancipated peasants, penetrated to the villages, organised theatrical entertainments, stirred up political and economic unrest, and in these and other ways revealed the importance of the theatre to the restless Mass.

With the introduction of Marxism began a definite era of class-struggle for liberty. About 1880, or eight years before the assassination of Alexander II by anarchists, the Social Democrats, composed of two parties, Menshevists, or Right Revolutionary Party, and Bolsheviks, or Left Revolutionary Party, took control, and a new phase of agitation and organisation began. It was mainly influenced by Marxian mass philosophy, the new whole instead of the classes; mass religion or faith, the Mass as God or complete union with the external, that is, objective world; mass faith in communism as an instrument of social liberation. Marxism was swiftly propagated in the peasant and industrial areas by the bolshevists; and in the cities and towns by the Menshevists, including the intellectual and professional classes. Thus Marxists with their fundamental ideas of mass liberty turned their attention to the operatives or urban industrial workers, who were really peasants attracted to the big towns by the invasion of Western European industrialism.

These ideas were cleverly used by agitators to make the toilers hostile to individualism and capitalistic Imperialism. The peasant workers retained their primitive dramatic instinct which enabled them, as time went on, to establish innumerable theatrical organisations and to express their aims and indignation spontaneously without that theatrical training which has become so fashionable in the theatres patronised by the middle and upper classes.

The first great outcome of this sort of Marxian interference with the peasants and industrial workers was seen in the 1905-6 period of amazing insurrections and strikes. During this phase

of the class-struggle over 5,000 clubs and theatrical organisations of a revolutionary character were established which shows clearly that the new purpose of the Russian theatre as an instrument of social liberty had taken root. The revolution was defeated and the revolutionary theatrical organisations were partly suppressed and partly driven underground where during the Tsarist regime they formed secret agitational theatrical organisations.

From 1906 to 1917 was a period of plot and counter-plot, persecution of the Social Democrats, especially the Left revolutionary Party. They hit back. At the same time the split between the Right and Left parties widened. Then came the 1917 March revolution and the Kerenski Government; the struggle between Mensheviks and Bolsheviks; the growth of the soviets in response to the popular demand for a new and reasonable authority to secure the gains of the struggle arising out of the Marxian theory of social freedom. Actually, an authority best able to solve the pressing problems of bread, land and peace. The failure of the Kerenski Government to do so led to the October bolshevist revolution. Kerenski was replaced by Lenin supported by the soviets. Greeted with the cry of "All power to the Soviet," the promise of land for the peasants, the factories for the workers, and peace for the soldiers, the Mass saw itself free of all constraint.

The October revolution, together with the attempt to fulfil its promises (which made for a new order of society), inaugurated the epoch of the New Russian theatre. These events placed it, indirectly at first, under the government of the proletariat (a term made to include industrial workers, peasants, soldiers and sailors) upon whom, in collaboration with intellectual directors and instructors, subsequently devolved the task of restoring to the theatre its vital function. It was the business of these representatives of the Left Wing of the theatre to reintroduce life-centred content and form to the theatre, of which the Right Wing, through misconception, had deprived it.

(d) COURT OR PROFESSIONAL THEATRE. CONTRIBUTORY MOVEMENTS
IN THE RIGHT WING THEATRE PRIOR TO 1917.

I. COURT THEATRE.

II. EXPERIMENTAL THEATRE.

(a) STANISLAVSKI.

(b) SECESSIONISTS.

MEIERHOLD.

TAIROV.

VAKHTANGOV, ETC.

III. COMMERCIAL THEATRE.

Though the main historical contribution towards the restoration to the theatre of its true function and form, and the preparations for its use as an instrument of social liberation and redemption, instead of one of individual pleasure, came from the Left, a historical contribution of much importance came from the Right also.

The history of the Right Wing is the history of the professional theatre, court, experimental and commercial. That is, the kind of theatre commonly associated with the use of the word theatre. Thus when the Russian theatre is referred to, the established, orthodox, traditional, conventional theatre, a concern run by speculators, intelligent reformist business men, is usually meant. The revolutionary theatrical organisations are omitted. So it becomes necessary to speak of the New Russian theatre because it cannot be described by any of these terms.

There is some confusion concerning the date and circumstance of the foundation of the Right Wing theatre. Probably it was established under royal and aristocratic patronage in a remote age. In Russia there is a belief that the foundation dates from the time of Tsar Alexis Mikhailovitch. Mainly owing to the activity of a German pastor, Johannes Gregory, a theatre arose in which comedy was represented by the half-educated children of the peasants under imperial compulsion. Peter the Great saw the educational possibilities of the theatre. Through him it was made free and German and English actors replaced

14 THE NEW SPIRIT IN THE RUSSIAN THEATRE

the peasant pioneer ones. Finally the professional theatre was firmly established by Fyodor Volkov under the patronage of Tsarina Elizabeth.

Volkov was a product of the Court theatre. He had a genuine passion for the theatre which led him to obtain an expert knowledge of it. In time he was able to extend the Right Wing theatre business all over the country. He invaded districts where the professional theatre was unknown with the result that Right Wing theatres and theatrical organisations sprang up. Volkov's contribution to the subsequent development of the theatre was twofold. He organised the Right Wing theatre on a professional and business basis, and he made the theatre a national concern served by actors who drew their inspiration from the actual experiences of the people. By establishing the professional theatre he gave an impetus to the growth of that form of theatre. By giving the theatre a national and life-centred importance he contributed to the present-day use of the New Russian theatre.

At the time of the October revolution the intellectual, experimental, semi-commercial and strictly commercial theatres were about 100 years old. The first three were the outcome of ideas derived from all sources, ancient Greek, Mediaeval, English, German, Italian and so on. The strictly commercial theatre had acquired the habit of copying the business methods of and taking much material from Western European sources. As a result it repeated the worst excesses of the Financial Age of the European (particularly French and American) theatres. In consequence it had nothing to contribute to the new theatre and was bound to disappear when the demand for ephemeral rubbish completely ceased.

With the other three theatres it was different. Though their concepts, ideas, methods of interpretation and representation were of an individualistic character, some of the ideas and methods were suitable for adaptation in a theatre dictated by collective necessities. There was, for instance, the theatre

governed by the bureaucrats who used it for Government and imperialistic propaganda, just as the New theatre has been used for Government and democratic propaganda. There was the theatre owned and controlled by private directors who used it for experiment in reform, that is, theatrical reform, and to propagate the idea that drama and art production is an individualistic phenomenon. And it reflects the social conditions and tendencies dictated by class-society to authors with radical tendencies. Such conditions expressed in plays criticising and ridiculing the autocracy and bureaucrats, and in others, the critical phases of changing society, were of material value to the bolsheviks seeking a powerful weapon with which to expose the uselessness of the old social order.

These nineteenth century radicals who contributed so materially to the theatrical work of a new epoch included Gogol, Tolstoi, Gorki, Ostrovski. The latter in particular has been a godsend to the New theatre with its stated aim of exhibiting anything that truthfully and ruthfully exposes the assinine stupidity, the offensive pretension, the self-degradation of the official class, as Ostrovski's plays do. Along with these radicals came the photographic realists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, who exhibited the epochal changes of class society, such as that of the merchant class superseding the landowning class ("Cherry Orchard"), and in doing so exposed the terrible futility, stagnation and hopelessness of the superseded class. Here existed a small body of work conceived in the class-society spirit, with characteristics that made it ready for the hand of the new Government.

Much of this material was contained in the repertory of the Moscow Art theatre. By a strange irony a great deal of the work of this famous theatre, which was conceived as an experimental and art theatre, was on the direct line of good bolshevik propaganda. Technically also it had important ideas to contribute to the New theatre. Its system of acting, its ensemble method of production, its photographic realism, these and other

ingredients have become included in the recipe for making a new technical tradition.

The Moscow Art theatre is one of the intellectual and experimental theatres that have survived the Revolution. A brief sketch of its nature and value and a detailed account of its principal contributions to the New theatre rightly belong here. But all that has to be said concerning its path and achievement and its connection with a social functioning theatre, is fully said elsewhere.

Material contributions to the New theatre came from other intellectual and experimental theatres that were break-aways from the Moscow Art theatre, and as such were touched by its spirit. There were Meierhold's theatre and Tairov's theatre, to mention but two. These passed through the Revolution bringing with them the power to bring about a revision of theatrical values, a revision of the constituent elements of the theatre. Meierhold and Tairov were in particular experimentalists of a very high order. Both had undergone a steady evolution from the very commencement of their theatrical careers. Both brought to the task of building the New theatre a wealth of experience and a capacity for adaptation that served them well in a theatre to which a revolution had introduced the elements of change and experiment. Their careers will be found traced elsewhere. Here it may be said that their contributions came from the intellectual æsthetic revolutionary spirit which both possessed. The story of their evolution is the story of a search for a new unity, and the attempt to banish from the theatre all dead concepts of technical expression, both excellent things to bring to a theatre resting on the principle of mass unity and demanding unconventional expression.

Following in the footsteps of Meierhold with his theories and practices of a theatre of all action, of unity, congregated action, the importance of the audience in serving to make the actor the supreme interpretator of the inner feelings, all of which was capable of adaptation to the utilitarian needs of a social

theatre, came authors, poets and playwrights, including Fedor Sologub, V. Ivananov and Evreinov, with their own theories and practices of mystical unity, congregate action and theatricality. The theatre was conceived as a Church as in the Middle Age, the spectators must write the plays and act in them instead of being merely passive spectators and listeners, the stage must be a sacrificial altar serving as a medium of sacrificial purification. It is not hard to see how theories and practices of the kind could be made to serve materialistic ends.

The New theatre, when all is considered, is a positivist Church in which the people as a whole undergo conversion to a positivist faith as enunciated by the bolshevist leaders. The stage is an altar on which is sacrificed the old social evil in order to purge the community of unrighteousness that they may enter upon a new epoch animated by the new spirit.

Vakhtangov brought his transforming ideas, as we shall see, to the service of the wonderful Hebrew theatre. Under his direction the Habima company developed a method of production, and a technique of action which for originality, expressiveness and general power are among the most powerful and effective features in the New theatre to-day. He too had a church-like and mystical concept of the theatre and animated the Jewish actors with a faith in their work that resembled religious ecstasy.

CHAPTER III

CONTEMPORARY MATERIALS

B. MATERIALS

II. CONTEMPORARY. CONTEMPORARY INFLUENCES (FORCES AND CIRCUMSTANCES) ON THE NEW THEATRE SINCE 1917

A. CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHICAL, POLITICAL, MILITARY, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL EVENTS IN THEIR CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER IN RUSSIA PRIOR TO 1928, WHICH INFLUENCED THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT OF THE NEW THEATRE

I. PHILOSOPHICAL.

The first and most powerful contemporary influence on the New theatre was Leninism, or the philosophy of Bolshevism as enunciated by Lenin, who revised or interpreted Marxism in the light of the Financial Age, and its economic necessities. The bolshevist philosophy, according to Lenin was the philosophy of causality embodying a rigid and dynamic metaphysical and dialectical conception of nature and society. It yielded a definite plan of society which took the form of a new social pyramid to be realised by the whole people working in collaboration. The pyramid rested on Marxian economic materialism. At its apex was collective or associative society, representing the aim and end of bolshevism. The function of the theatre was to encourage and assist the people to build a working model of this pyramid as soon as the moment was ripe for the purpose. First to lay its economic foundations, then to erect the materialistic framework rising logically from the ground plan, and thereafter to fill in the framework stage by stage, as they unfolded under the touch of knowledge,—scientific, economic, industrial, social, and so on, towards the

peak to be attained. By this means, Lenin, who accepted Marx's theory that a classless society is the logical end of society and class-war is the means, sought to put the theory into immediate practice. The pyramid plan was a part of the general plan of action for the realisation of a new Russia based on the belief that immediate world-revolution was not only practical but would be realised. First clearance of the ground then the new erection.

It was this belief and the intense struggle to which it gave rise that subjected the theatre to vicissitudes that delayed its work of collaborating in the erection of the pyramid. Not till 1921 was a start made at the economic foundation and even then there was the obstacle created by the New Economic Policy to be overcome. Capitalism reappeared in the form of a body of traders and made reactionary demands on the theatre which had to be taken into account at the time. To-day the economic foundation is fairly secure, but whether the erection of the pyramid will proceed according to plan is beyond prophecy at present.

II. POLITICAL.

The political influence was asserted by the Government. It appeared in expediency. The New theatre was intended to explain the meaning of the seizure and consolidation of political power, and the attempt to eliminate the capitalist and bourgeois elements of society. Hence plays reflecting class war.

III. MILITARY.

Military influence appeared in using the theatre to support war aims, as the Western European theatres did during the Great War. In Russia the theatre reflected the aims of the Civil War with its fighting on many fronts. Plays were produced concentrating interest on the heroic side of the war. Soldiers came hot from the trenches to add intensity and realism.

IV. REORGANISATION.

The nationalisation, rationalisation and sovietisation of the theatre also exerted a formative influence. They introduced

20 THE NEW SPIRIT IN THE RUSSIAN THEATRE

free access and free experiment and a system of collective government that did much to promote its new spirit. *Plays for the Mass were forthcoming.*

V. THE BLOCKADE.

The cutting off supplies had an important influence. Forced to work in accordance with the strict needs of blockade determined conditions, the men of the theatre were compelled to economise theatrical materials. They created and invented new material. They did without. They evolved simple moving constructive facts. They were helped by the use of the only available scenic materials to demonstrate that the problem of constructive synthesis, which has replaced that of æsthetic synthesis (so fashionable before the war but now practically dead) must have a geometrical solution. Scenery simplified to the utmost degree proceeded to develop on the geometrical line.

VI. THE NEW ECONOMIC POLICY.

Russia at its economic worst also affected the theatre. The restless peasants refused to produce food under existing terms of wholesale requisitioning of crops. Lenin reverted to an earlier plan. The New Economic Policy was the result. It offered the peasants an incentive to produce food and restored their confidence in the Government. It also made concessions to the little bourgeoisie and profiteering shopkeepers which led to a revival of the individualistic theatre. Plays of compromise appeared.

VII. THE BLACK FAMINE.

The great disaster of 1921 had a reconciliation influence. Though it stopped theatrical progress in those towns and rural districts most affected, it brought the peasants and workers together in a mutual endeavour to stop its ravages. In the big cities it strengthened the collective spirit of the theatre. At the same time it temporarily diverted the work of the theatre from economic reconstruction to famine relief purposes. The theatre

made an appeal for help just as in England at wartime the theatre made an appeal for war funds.

I. CONTEMPORARY ECONOMIC, CULTURAL AND SOCIAL EVENTS IN
RUSSIA DURING THE FIRST PERIOD OF STABILITY, 1923-27.

A. ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND RECONSTRUCTION.

The influence of the Black Famine on the theatre continued to make itself felt long after the worst effects of that terrible scourge had disappeared. The Famine had the effect of bringing the urban and rural populations together in a mutual endeavour to meet the situation produced. The theatre was used to make an appeal for national unity, to fight the Famine, to promote a health crusade, and to overcome the general economic distress. Plays exhorted the people to take scientific means to preserve health. There was also a great poster health campaign.

But the period of peace and stability that succeeded the long period of fighting and famine and the threatened invasion of proletarian privileges by the Nepmen, was chiefly remarkable for influences on the theatre of an economic and cultural character. Money was needed for building and reconstruction purposes. The people were told by all theatrical means to save, to build, to construct. The immense resources of the country, mineral, agricultural and other, were waiting to be realised. The people were told to produce. The urgent needs of scientific industrialism, of scientific agriculture, demanded to be satisfied. The people were told to get knowledge particularly in industrial and agricultural production.

The greatest influence, immediately affecting expression in the theatre came from the proletarians as the standard bearers of the new socialism and the zealous guardians of new theatrical rights. Owing to the presence of the reactionary Nepmen class-war reared its head on the stage again. Along with plays concerned with the peaceful task of instructing and enlightening the people on the regulation of productive processes, concentration on economy and organisation of scientific agriculture and industrialism, particularly concerning the factory, and the

22 THE NEW SPIRIT IN THE RUSSIAN THEATRE

long-drawn-out health campaign: went plays fulfilling the function of calling attention to the scheming and corrupting elements of society, indicting the Nepmen for debasing the young workers and reintroducing individualist exploitation. But the renewed antagonism between the proletarians and the capitalists, called Nepmen, although it had a disturbing influence which called forth plays of a satiric and aggressive character, designed to expose bureaucratic impostors, reactionaries at work in the factories, "whites" corrupting the young proletarian intellectuals, did not prevent the continuous exercise of a creative spirit which certainly animated the theatrical achievement of this period. Nothing occurred to interfere with the gradual process of the unification of all parts of the new theatre. In 1922 the theatre was in three distinct parts answering to the three political divisions Right, Centre and Left. Then the Centre dropped out leaving the Right and Left to contend for supremacy. By 1926 the workers supported by the Mass had exerted sufficient pressure on the Right to cause it practically to capitulate. The Right Wing directors were compelled to conform to the demand for Left Wing fare to avoid "bankruptcy." Thus it attained a unity of purpose unequalled by any other theatre in the world. A general subject was given to it for interpretation and illumination. This subject was divided up between the playhouses composing it, each according to its special purpose. By this means the playhouses became specialised off in an entirely new way having no resemblance to the specialised playhouses, say, in London before the war.

B. FOREIGN AFFAIRS. THE BREAK WITH ENGLAND, ETC.

In 1927 the theatre was influenced by external political events foremost among them being the diplomatic rupture with England. The step England took of breaking with Russia drew forth a demonstration of defiance and threats of aggression. Moreover it had the effect of strengthening the sentiment of national unity and deepening and intensifying the sentiment

of liberty. All this was reflected by the theatre which for a brief period revived the kind of stage war that belonged to the stirring times of the revolution. The theatre buckled on its armour and fought. During the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the revolution, which took place in November, 1927, the theatre reached the highest point of the exhibition of enthusiastic aggressiveness and progressiveness. Plays recalled what bolshevist Russia had achieved in the past and at the same time revealed the wonderful advance in theatrical interpretation and representation.

C. DISARMAMENT. RETURN TO A CALMER MOOD.

At the beginning of 1928 peace influence commenced to operate and the people and theatre exhibited a calmer mood. Fear of war, or the anxiety to avoid it, led the bolshevist Government to participate in the Disarmament Conference at Geneva. The theatre sensitive as ever to the new social conditions arising from war or peace resumed its task of laying economic foundations.

PART II

BUILDING THE THEATRE, 1917-23

FORGING THE NEW TOOL

IN Part I. I have shown that the New theatre is the cultural continuation and crown of an historical process of liberation which culminated in the great social revolution of November, 1917.

The key to the building of the theatre is the word *liberation*—*liberation for the people and liberation for itself fully to express the social liberation.* The Revolution required the aid of the principal cultural institutions, in particular the theatre, to spread the bolshevist ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity which, derived from the French Revolution, had during the Great war become self-determination, democracy and internationalism, and now promised to embody new leading ideas as dictated by collective necessities. The bolshevists, for instance, sought to give them Marx's economic and class interpretation as adapted by Lenin to the latter-day revolutionary needs of the new working-class society.

Thus I have shown that the whole revolutionary movement prior to 1917—radical, literary, oratorical and theatrical—was directed towards the liberation of Russia from Tsarist, political and economic oppression, the liberation of the Mass—peasants, town workers—of wage-earners generally, from the exploitation of the individual landowner and capitalist; and the liberation of the theatre from class society ownership, monopoly and grave limitations. Just as since the Revolution attention has been directed, through literary and theatrical channels, towards the realisation of the liberation of the Mass from a past class-society domination and from exploitation by the individual. There is

28 THE NEW SPIRIT IN THE RUSSIAN THEATRE

no doubt that this attention has been insisted on, until it has become an urgent demand by the people. In the theatre the directors, playwrights and players have come to play upon an instinctive desire for liberation in the audience which to-day powerfully reacts to the appeal of the sentiment. Thus has arisen a life-centred theatre with a present-day doctrine of liberty.

In Part II. I come to the processes of building the New theatre in two distinct stages that reflect the two stages of present-day social evolution in Russia. First as a fighting machine, then as a microcosm of the new social world in the making of which the foundation of economic determinism alone has been reached. Accordingly I describe organisation, the theoretical builders, their object of action, the master builders, (or Big Five), the lesser builders. I indicate the personalities of the leaders as determined by heredity, physique and training, and the task before them. I explain their conceptions of the theatre, their objects, their processes. That is, their visions, technical ideas and equipment and achievements, and the social meanings and significance of their work. These builders are shown carrying out the general plan by erecting a new structure in which the audience appears unfolding under the touch of collective necessities. At the same time they are seen moulding the audience into scientific shape by instructing it how to make use of present-day scientific advance, as communicated by new technical devices. Thus they put science on the stage, in its varied forms, pure, natural, mechanical, the factory, the engineering shop, the chemical laboratory, the physical culture school, the new architectural-engineering forms and urban environment,—whatever is scientifically calculated to concentrate, organise, direct and discipline, and in other ways powerfully react upon public thought and action.

Special attention is given to the new content of the theatre, the social ideology evoked by changed conditions, co-operation and by release. Also to the means evolved to emphasise the

importance and meaning of this ideology. Execution is seen rejecting the actor's old fund of tricks, which once passed for histrionic magic by filling the pockets of profiteering theatrical managers, and accepting the actor as a citizen capable of serving the idea of social liberation, either as a soldier-actor fighting against interference with the process of liberation, or as a social-actor exhibiting keen interest in questions of social reconstruction. Furthermore, execution is seen enlisting the stage as a recruit on the side of theatrical unity of expression. Invention and zeal perform a miracle in rearing a phoenix of action out of the ashes of the old static stage. For the first time the stage is seen in eruption. There is harmony between it and the scenery, between these and the performance, many of the interpretative ideas for which come from the gymnasium as suited to the interpretation of the movements of the factory, the workshop, of the every-day jobs of a whole community working co-operatively in the new mechanical spirit, that is, with intelligence, perception, precision, imagination, daring and sternly disciplined severity. The circus as much as the workshop has communicated this harmony to the theatre, and it is the circus performer as much as the worker and artist-mechanic who has helped to infuse a new spirit into the rebuilding of the Russian theatre.

The organisation of the New theatre was of course determined by Government conception and purpose. The October revolution effected many changes. One was the transference of cultural-educational institutions and values to the whole people, for their use and enjoyment. The theatre, art galleries, museums, scientific laboratories, etc., were placed at the service of the Mass and steps were taken to organise the systematic preservation of these institutions and values. The theatre, galleries and museums were nationalised, and assistance was given to those engaged in the various departments of culture.

But the process of organisation, preservation and safeguarding was, at first, a slow one. This is easily understood when military

30 THE NEW SPIRIT IN THE RUSSIAN THEATRE

and political events are considered. In 1917 the Revolution produced chaos, and it fixed public attention on the great problems dictated by the collective system to which it had given birth. Everywhere Russians not engaged in fighting came together in groups eagerly discussing (as Russians are in the habit of doing) the meaning and probable outcome of the sensational events of the moment. In the two years that followed the Russian leaders were much too occupied trying to overcome the immediate consequences of the revolutionary exploit to pay attention to the organisation and consolidation of cultural gains, and to fix new values. They were compelled to deal in turn with the Germans, the Whites and the Allies. Invasion, Civil war, and intervention kept them fighting on many Fronts till November 14th, 1920, when the final defeat of Wrangle brought to a close the period known as Militant Communism.

Throughout 1918 and 1919 the theatre, though left much to itself, followed the rapid course of events and reflected the effects of fighting, blockade and hunger as much as the people did. At the same time it reflected the moods of the intelligentsia and Mass alike, on the one hand staging the Revolution in the form of romantic heroism, deifying it by the aid of the poets, as one of the greatest exploits of man in quest of liberation; on the other staging the trenches and the epic of the actual warfare.

During these two years, then, the basic principle of the bolshevist theatrical policy was applied. This policy born of the October revolution handed the whole theatre over to the people. Immediately a number of enthusiasts, including Government representatives and Labour leaders, made the attempt to establish a Mass theatre. This theatre has been likened by critics who have not visited Russia to the open-air pageants with which England and America are familiar. They rest their opinion on the fact that before the Revolution pageants and great open-air spectacles were unknown in Russia. The Mass theatre conceived by the bolshevist enthusiasts was not pageantry in the

Western European sense. Its purpose was not the pictorial representation of an historical event or epoch, but to encourage the people, many of whom had never entered a playhouse, to fight the battles of the Revolution over again so as to understand *their meaning*, and to *theatricalise human life*. Fostered by such means, the dramatic instinct of the Mass, it was thought, would become more and more a leading factor in the solution of the problem of producing a widespread desire for liberation.

One of the earliest applications of the Mass theatre idea was the October theatre directed by V. Meierhold. Its intention was to enable the Mass to fight pitched battles between Russia and its enemies with the aid of actual war apparatus.

Matters rested thus until 1919, when towards the end of that year the Government made a start at the organisation of the old and new art values, represented, in particular, by the theatre. The latter asked to be put on the path of securing its own liberation in order to express the doctrine of the liberation of the people, by means of an authoritative body like the Government, for it could not fulfil its purpose by being handed over to the whole people without being put in order, and possessing a guide to begin with.

The principles of the Revolution had nationalised the theatres, and declared the whole of the theatrical property as national property to be held in trust for the people by the Bolshevik State, or whatever represented the controlling body. The task of the Government in 1919 was to organise and safeguard this collective property in such a way that it should be made use of only for bolshevist social purpose. The preservation of its formative cultural values was the main thing.

Accordingly the theatre was officially nationalised in the sense of being sovietised. Decrees of nationalisation were issued. Not only the playhouses and opera houses were thus put fully at the service of the people, but works by leading authors and composers were nationalised.

Sovietisation, that is the system of theatre soviets, turned

32 THE NEW SPIRIT IN THE RUSSIAN THEATRE

the theatre into an efficient State and People's organisation. The organisation was designed to rest primarily on proletarian dictatorship and the application of the principles of Lenin. Everything was to be done to glorify the new bolshevist regime and to ridicule the old imperialistic one. Theatrical soviets composed of representatives of all departments of the theatre were formed to participate in administrative and other activities. Instructors were appointed to explain to all concerned the nature of the privileges and cultural values claimed by the New theatre. Actors were regarded as workers and citizens. Their salaries ceased and they were paid in kind. They became automatically members of the All-Russia Professional Trade Union. They were expected to combine their theatrical duties with social ones. They had not only to act but to appear in the open as speakers on behalf of the new social order. A system of free tickets distributed by the Trades Unions was established to enable every unionist to have free access to the theatre. A committee of experts, forming a board of censorship, was formed to exclude plays having a reactionary tendency. Finally the theatre was made a department of the New Educational Ministry, the function of which was to spread culture among the illiterate Mass.

It would seem that these changes placed the theatre under the control of an educational dictator. But he was a Marxian dictator with special gifts for bolshevist theatrical activities, and one capable of accepting the obligations of the new theatrical situation with a common-sense enthusiasm rarely to be found in a minister who is called upon to control the theatre, consisting of all the playhouses, as a Government department.

On the whole, the theatre was organised under unusual circumstances at a moment of national struggle and unparalleled economic distress.

Later, owing to materially altered Government plans and policy, this theatrical organisation underwent change which is described elsewhere. Here it should be said that the organisa-

tion of the established playhouses did not affect the thousands of little spontaneous theatrical organisations, club and other, which sprang up immediately after the Revolution. The Ministry for Popular Education and Art had no jurisdiction over them and they were left to do as they liked provided they avoided reactionary tendencies.

Before coming to the story of the Builders, the conditions that existed everywhere in Russia during the remainder of the period under consideration deserve to be noted. The conclusion of the Civil war in 1920 found the Soviet Republic practically prostrate but with undiminished determination to consolidate its gains. Large numbers of industrial workers were ill, food was strictly rationed, the great industrial undertakings were in ruins, materials of all sorts were scarce, some, especially those used by artists were lacking, the peasants could barely till the land, they were hampered by lack of machinery, by shortage of seed, by transport difficulties. To add to the economic struggle of the period in the Autumn of 1921 came the Black Famine. The sun-baked earth went black and bare, the peasants died in thousands or fled to parts of Russia untouched by the famine. The leaders of the theatre were, as will be shown, seriously impeded by these conditions. The aim of the bolshevist theatrical organisation was to establish a co-operative and co-ordinated system of the theatrical expression of bolshevist policy, say the policy of the mass production of the sentiment of liberty. The first endeavour of the leaders was doubtless to secure this co-ordination. That is they accepted the bolshevist policy. But unstable social conditions, the problem of play supply, and other unfavourable factors prevented this. It was not till stabilisation came that they were able to secure co-ordination or unity of purpose.

CHAPTER V

THE BUILDERS (THEORETICAL)

THE first step of the builders of the new theatre was a mass improvisation. As the Revolution improvised on the social life, so the theatre reflected it. Declaring a mass use of the theatre for the propagation of the principles and objects of the October revolution, the Government provided representatives to promote the idea. Together with labour leaders they formed a body of theorists who sketched the outline of a Mass theatre and encouraged the toilers to fill it in. Simply they took advantage of circumstances to open a theatre without limit for the especial purpose of fostering the play spirit in the people, as the theatre did in the Middle Age, so that the latter could play at destroying the old world and building the new one. No limitations were imposed. Festival processions, parades, and mass celebrations generally were theatricalised and thus brought under the control of the State theatrical department. This opening phase of the New theatre which claiming the zealous co-operation of producers, poets, authors, players, decorators, of common-folk and intellectuals alike, seemed like the realisation at the outset of the aim of the bolshevists to establish a co-ordinated system of bolshevist expression. It was however a transitional phase. During the next few years the vicissitudes of Russia affected the attempt to bring the Mass theatre within the limit of the roofed-in theatre. The inconvenient size and form of this theatre led to mass production being confined to the open and transferred to the kinema.

It should be said that the early project of a Mass theatre took the fancy of the Mass. The Russians are exceedingly

fond of the theatre, they are instinctively dramatic. They express themselves theatrically on the least provocation. It is not extravagant to say that there is more real theatricalised life expression in the Russian streets and open spaces, in the cafés, in short, in the life of the people, than in all the theatres of Western Europe put together.

From the first then this Mass theatre idea attracted the attention of many able persons concerned with the new function and form of the theatre and of the Mass awakening to a consciousness of its own theatrical potentialities. It brought forth thinkers, many of them theorists, who proceeded to speak and write on the ideas, ideals and methods to be pursued. They urged that every facility should be granted to the Mass to theatricalise life in the open. They urged that opportunities should be afforded toilers with special gifts to prepare themselves in the different fields of culture, drama, art, literature, etc., to take leading parts in the mass production of the sentiment of liberty. The Press must throw open its columns to them, publication of their theories and ideas must be made easy, paths of communication between them and their less gifted fellows must be opened up. Much of this belongs to the Proletcult movement which will be explained presently. The point of capital importance here is that these theorists gave the Mass theatre movement a cultural value, while inciting everybody to take part in the movement.

This cultural side of the first phase of the theatre may be studied in the bulletins and news sheets published by workers' theatrical organisations at an early period of the history of the post-revolution theatre. That is, if they still exist, which is doubtful. Collectors may have copies. Those that I possess reveal the nature, scope, value of the cultural values, the time, trouble and thought expended on their exposition. Foremost among the theorists were the Minister for Education with his cultural-educational theories; P. M. Kergentsev, another Government representative, and an untiring worker in the cause of

the Mass theatre movement, as his two very important books show. As far as I know they are the only two books that throw a clear light on the theories and ideas of the Mass theatre.* They convince one that this form of theatre would have been a very imposing affair indeed, one best calculated to inspire and exercise the dramatic activities of a whole people, if it had been carried out as originally planned. A third theorist of significance appeared in V. Smyschlaiev with his carefully elaborated system for training the mass actor. In his theory the actor must be a part of the collective Mass whether in the theatre or out of it. In some ways his theories resemble those which V. Meierhold later put into practice, and which the State organisation of the theatre in 1919 rendered practical. Smyschlaiev wanted the actor to be a citizen, a bolshevist and a social politician. He must pass through the bolshevist party school and take an active part in the work of the party organisation. He must undertake such social work as binds him to the party. Apart from these bolshevist innovations there was nothing in his theory of actor training that could not be found in any of the theatres of Western Europe.

The realisation of the Mass theatre idea is dealt with in the section describing the proletcult theatre.

* "Tborcheskie Teatr." Moscow. 1920. "Das Schopferische Theater." Berlin. 1922.

CHAPTER VI

THE BUILDERS (PRACTICAL)

(A) LUNACHARSKI

THE first stage of building the New theatre saw the appearance of builders with a theory of a Mass theatre that should engage the theatrical activities of the whole people. It was to give them every facility for playing with the idea of liberation while helping the Government to solve the problem how to maintain power. The idea appealed to a people set in sudden and violent motion by a revolutionary change, but it did so for different reasons. Some wanted to express their feeling of release from what had appeared hopeless oppression and poverty. Others, the poets, for instance, were actuated by a mystical and religious conviction that they were engaged in a holy war and the moment of the freest realisation of their ideals had come. To them participation in the work of the Mass theatre, in its widest interpretation, was a celebration of victory. Others, political agitators and social reformers, for instance, remembering the oppression, injuries and ridicule they had endured at the hands of a class-society now being swept away, wanted to express their feelings of revenge. A very great number being only vaguely aware of the real motives that actuated them allowed themselves to be caught on the crest of the wave of enthusiasm, and being hypnotised by the novelty of the Mass theatre movement were swallowed up by it.

Next in order came the Master Builders, or the Big Five as we may call them. With one exception they were men of the theatre, experts with a profound knowledge of its theory and practice obtained through an intimate experience of the theatre

38 THE NEW SPIRIT IN THE RUSSIAN THEATRE

itself. The four men of the theatre were V. Meierhold, C. S. Stanislavski, A. Tairov, and A. Granovski. The exception was A. V. Lunacharski, the Minister for Education and Art. It is not too much to say that the post-revolution theatre was very fortunate to have these five intellectuals to assist almost from the first in giving it a new function and form. I say almost from the first because their influences on the New theatre did not commence to assert themselves till the revolutionary chaos was beginning to yield to order. It is true that Lunacharski was early concerned with the formation of the Ministry for Education and Art, which came to include a theatrical department. The first stage of the task was, as he says somewhere, extremely ambitious, but almost impracticable because of serious material difficulties. Meierhold seems to have accepted the bolshevist regime from the beginning. Tairov continued for a time to develop his pre-revolution theory of neo-realism. Stanislavski was sorting out his pre-war goods to suit the taste of a new audience. Granovski a leading Jewish director was hardly fledged. Though the October revolution released the Jews in accordance with the bolshevist policy of National Cultural Autonomy that emancipated races and nationalities that had suffered under the rule of the Tsars, a little time passed before the gifted Jewish directors in Moscow began to exercise their wonderful creative power.

It was necessary that such men should appear to enable the theatre to be prepared to carry out its predestined task. That the Revolution should hand the theatre to the Mass seemed natural and inevitable. It was inevitable upon so much that had taken place prior to the Revolution. But the New theatre was conceived of as the means of production of new social and cultural values. At the time of the Revolution the Mass was simply a blind force quite unable to produce new values without proper guidance. Left to itself without such guidance it might have used the theatre for the exercise of its primitive unorganised instincts. It could not be



" 200,000 "

A musical comedy produced at the Moscow Academic Jewish theatre. The setting shows the earlier method of

trusted unaided to produce a working stage model of the new scientific social world determined by the Revolution, simply because it had not the up-to-date scientific knowledge, and a perception of the new cultural values for the purpose. Someone was needed with the gifts of a scientific social builder combined with those of a circus manager to put it on the proper path. The term circus manager is not used lightly as will be shown presently. Three at least of the Master Builders very astutely perceived the importance of the circus and its technique to the New theatre. It offered those sensible forms of expression by means of which it is easiest to reach the understanding of the Mass. It contributed apparatus to the theatre and the principles of that highly disciplined interpretative movement which had far more to say to the common folk than dialogue.

A very great deal could be written about the five Master Builders, that is, the five who have played a principal part in the building of the New theatre from the commencement to the present advanced stage. A full description of their complex personalities, the facts of their heredity, physique and training, their theories, methods and achievements would fill a bulky volume. Such a description cannot be attempted here; space is much too limited. All that can be done is to suggest what the Builders are and what they have achieved in the successive stages of their theatrical careers.

Let me take first the two men who have identified themselves most closely with the application of Lenin-Marxian philosophy, laws and principles to the theatre, who have indeed insisted upon its interpretation of the ideology of the new society in a strictly bolshevist way. I refer to the bolshevist statesman, Anatol V. Lunacharski, the intimate friend of Lenin, and to the great Russian producer, Vsevolod Meierhold, whose conversion to bolshevism is of later date than Lunacharski's.

If the Russian theatre was fortunate in possessing men of the theatre capable of guiding it along a new path, Russia itself

was very fortunate in possessing two men who had ample experience for marking out that path, in other words, of contributing to the erection of such a theatre as the epoch demanded. The one was required to secure the theatre as a whole as a heritage and to the use of the common folk. The other to shape it as an up-to-date machine to reflect the mind of the common folk searching for the meaning and significance of liberation, of the new power to control circumstances in order to make existence more tolerable, and for knowledge of the methods of the general task of rebuilding Russia in the new machine, and not in the old mechanical way.

The one regarded the theatre as a cultural-educational and civilising (bolshevist) instrument, capable of establishing a standard of educational, political and social values different from and superior to those prevalent outside Russia, but resting on traditions of the past. He took, in fact, the more or less conservative view that the masterpieces of the past should be preserved and made use of, those of social significance to be selected, however, in preference to the non-social ones. He himself wrote and adapted plays, selected subjects for operas and helped to adapt his plays for the kinema.

The other regarded the theatre as a theatrical instrument, capable of establishing a new standard of theatrical values different from, and superior to, those found in the theatre in pre-revolution days, and therefore having little or nothing to do with past traditions. His experiences satisfied him that the New theatre could give practical shape to his long dream of theatrical unity more effectively than the old one could ever have done. Indeed the New one presented itself to him as the best possible means of achieving oneness of audience and players, of interpreting and representing a dramatic action into which the audience would be drawn irresistibly.

From these two points—cultural education as a theatrical value, and life-centred unity of all the objects and agents of

interpretation and representation in a theatrical form, they approached the great theatrical task.

The facts of Lunacharski's early political career need not detain me here. He was one of the band of nine energetic men who Lenin gathered round him to study and apply bolshevist principles and methods. He went into exile with Lenin and while in exile no doubt thought out the system of proletarian culture best suited to Russia when the expected great change over of power should take place. For though a member of the bolshevist party, a student of, and believer in, Marxian doctrine, he was an aristocrat, a poet, æsthete, a man of culture in the strict sense, who while approving of the reversion of society, the wholesale confiscation of property and class-struggle yet clung tenaciously to his belief in the cultural values of the precious art treasures of the past. This duality, of course, suggested that he was the type of man who if he became minister would do his utmost to safeguard those art treasures which formed the cultural heritage of Russia and use them for educational ends. The course of events proved that the suggestion was correct. During the months that followed the revolution the wildest rumours were circulated abroad, that the contents of palaces, mansions, museums and art galleries had fallen into the hands of vandals and been ruthlessly destroyed. Quite recently we had a writer in a London monthly journal repeating the rumours as an excuse for describing the masterpieces in the Hermitage that he supposed had gone to make utilities for the soldiers and peasants. The writer's attitude was clearly shown in a concluding note which told readers that the Hermitage had just been reopened and was apparently in its old condition, but the writer doubted whether the news was true.

Not long after there came a confirmatory book by Sir Martin Conway, whose special visit to Russia showed him how well the art treasures had been protected and preserved. In nationalising such cultural values contained in private as well

as in public collections, the Government were in a position to organise and maintain many new art galleries and museums. Indeed the number of these public institutions has risen from 50 before the war to about 300 at the present time. Strangely enough the man mainly responsible for this work of safeguarding and popularisation was Lunacharski the fervent bolshevist.

But the fact of capital importance concerning Lunacharski with which this book deals is his association, chiefly as an educationalist and a representative of the Government with the New theatre. Soon after the Revolution Lenin appointed him Minister for Education and Art. Under his control were a number of different cultural departments of science, art, music, literature and so on, to which was added in due course a theatrical department. Together they stood for the new and old cultural values. The full enjoyment by the Mass of Russia's art treasures was a firm basic principle of bolshevist policy at the time of the revolution. It remains a cardinal principle of bolshevist policy to-day. The business of the Ministry for Education was to instruct the Mass, especially the proletarians, in the nature and value to them of these treasures. I say especially the proletarians because Lunacharski as a supporter of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" at a very early period of his Marxian history became pre-occupied with a plan of education that should remake the proletarian in Lunacharski's own likeness when the time came for action. That is the proletarian (whoever he may be) was to be educated to be a fervent Marxian and a man of culture as Lunacharski was. This meant, of course, that he would share Lunacharski's decided leaning towards the culture of the past. It may be that Lunacharski overestimated results, for after his appointment as Minister for Education he quickly noticed that a large body of extreme proletarians were not at all disposed to maintain a spiritual continuity such as he had in mind. They wanted instead to destroy evidences of a past that to them was full of evil. They wanted

to cut out memory and to live only for aspiration. They would certainly have destroyed the cultural past but for the firm steps taken by Lunacharski to prevent them.

Lunacharski has been spoken slightly of as a sort of Lord Chamberlain. He is something far more than that. While the English Lord Chamberlain is chiefly concerned with licencing theatres and plays and seeing that managers adapt their exhibitions to meet the demands of public taste and at the same time fulfil legal demands, Lunacharski has been concerned from the first with putting the Ministry for Education on the stage. He has been to a very large extent proprietor of the places of amusement inasmuch as all have been under his jurisdiction and their activities have been conducted under the watchfulness of the Minister for Education. The story of the New theatre under Lunacharski is really the pedagogical story of the bolshevist Ministry for Education and Art. The task of both has been to spread culture (proletarian) among the whole people while serving the cultural cause of all proletarians outside Russia. Lunacharski's peculiar proletarian educational theories probably worked out while he was engaged as an underground propagandist before the war, though little noticed while in the air, brought him powerful enemies when put into practice in the art world, the theatre and the opera. And those enemies so far triumphed as to deprive him of the full use of theatrical space, the whole of which he would have used for spreading culture in his own way. They opposed his experiments, in particular, his early support of futurism as the best form with which to express a revolutionary content. They disliked his method of fighting for a social ideal with old weapons. They regarded his looking back at the past as reactionary. His defence of the conservative movement to maintain old experimental and State theatres, his preference for old-fashioned operas put to new use because the simplicity of their music and their gorgeous staging appealed to the naïve Mass and assisted his work of popular cultural education; these and other "back-

slidings" as they were termed, provided matter for strong if not violent criticism. There was a breakaway to the Right and the Left. Lunacharski took up a Central position, which he maintained for some years, while yielding to the pressure of extreme technical ideas that expressed the ascent, as it may be called, from an æsthetic synthesis to a constructive synthesis strictly in harmony with the collective necessities and the mechanical developments of the epoch. At the same time, he exerted a wide influence. This much might be expected from a man with a strong personality, abundant energy and extraordinary capacity for work. Seven years after the Revolution one still found culture of the past in the old State theatres and in one or two of the old established theatres which had preserved their conservative values while partly adapting themselves to the expression of strong revolutionary ones.

To sum up Lunacharski's contributions to the New theatre, he has made it a Government department and thus kept it going at moments of extreme political, military and social crises. He has made it an instrument of proletarian education and propaganda. He has used it to preserve and apply the culture of the past as the basis of a proletarian culture as yet in the making. He has encouraged it to express a new social ideal resting on the doctrines of Marx and Lenin, and though seeking to maintain his cultural and rather old-fashioned attitude in all the early phase of its post-revolution history, has moved with it to the Left by adopting a compromise between the dying æsthetic synthesis and the new-born constructive one. In short he has appeared in the theatre as a moderate builder, by no means hard and inflexible, but wise enough not to come between rival extremist factions, recognizing that the theatre had entered upon a vital phase of existence and all the thought and action relating to it must be kept fluid and spontaneous for the sake of its proper growth and development. A list of his productions is given elsewhere.

Here is a summary of Lunacharski's interpretation of and

views on the conception and organisation of the theatre, together with those of the Commissions responsible to him :

1. The formulation of great educational plans to assist the change from an Imperial to a Bolshevik State.

2. The Organisation of Russia to exclude all non-bolshevist elements, *i.e.*, the old intelligentsia, bourgeoisie, etc.

3. The fundamental education of the Mass, *i.e.*, the new population, in bolshevism. To accept and understand everything of a bolshevist nature and to reject everything else.

4. War to be declared on ignorance and class.

5. The theatre to be made an organic part of the body of the State, one of its engines of war, and at the same time an instrument of enlightenment and recreation.

6. The function of the theatre, to construct the bolshevist world.

7. The Communist, *i.e.*, Bolshevik Party are provided with excellent materials for building this world. They have theories, phraseology and methods in scientific socialism of their own. In short, they have a Utopian world of their own to put upon the stage. This is a Marxian world modified by the psychology of the toilers.

8. The powerful influence of art to be exploited in the spirit of the Revolution through theatrical propaganda.

9. Establishment of inclusive organisations within the Department of Theatre Education. The first Commission since the Revolution was composed of propagandists. It took over the control of theatrical activity. It enforced a strict censorship forbidding the staging of any production not chosen by itself. This so seriously limited initiative that the Commission was suppressed in 1921. A new Commission was appointed. It was composed of four men of the theatre, representing its three divisions—Left, Centre and Right.

10. The programme of this Commission is to bring the toilers and the theatre together. To select existing plays according to these three divisions, but always preserving for the people

46 THE NEW SPIRIT IN THE RUSSIAN THEATRE

the best of dramatic exhibitions, of course not antipathetic to the bolshevist spirit of the New theatre.

11. To search for new bolshevist authors and encourage them.

12. To search for new trends in the theatre and disseminate them.

13. To extend the activities of the theatre to the remotest villages by means of tours and local productions in which the four Commissioners personally take part.

14. Special attention to be paid to the process of mixing the people in theatrical creations, by the organisation of pageants, mass performances, street shows, and other means.

15. The theatre to be used when necessary for the purpose of addressing the toilers.

Meierhold, as will be shown, was appointed to take charge of the Left Division of the Theatrical Department of the Ministry for Art and Education, while Lunacharski was concerned mainly with the Centre, or Moderate, one.

(B) MEIERHOLD, 1917-23

V. Meierhold is a wholly different type of theatre builder. In V. S. Lunacharski we have a Government minister using the theatre as an instrument of education. In Meierhold we have a man of the theatre in the strictest sense recasting the theatre as a new Machine for theatricalising social life. The term man of the theatre calls for definition, because it is one that is very much misused. By man of the theatre I mean one who is an organic part of the theatre, who lives and thinks for it, who is self-trained from the first to detect the sense, meaning, significance, the tendency, intention, essential interest of what the theatre brings to his notice. He understands its nature and value, has a true vision of it as well as a clear executive judgment. He fights courageously to raise it to its highest significance, and is continuously engaged with the question, how best to raise it to the level of highest interpretative power by making it one with those things which it is called upon to interpret. He passes from

experiment to experiment in a manner that reflects the unfolding of himself. Thus he causes it to reflect the dramatic experience, the process of the extension that his own individuality is undergoing. He believes in the theatre and clings to it no matter what vicissitudes face him. He does not tinker about with it for a time and then fly from it to live in seclusion, begging for money and opportunities and publicity and banquets to place him in a position to make a pathetic return to it long after his theories have been discredited or superseded. His ideal is not the theatre as a living, but living for the theatre.

That is a definition of Meierhold as a man of the theatre. He is the greatest living creative and interpretative producer. It is necessary to qualify the word producer because there is the average producer whose method of production may best be compared with that of the average manufacturer. The above definition applies to other Russian producers with whom I propose to deal. Russia is singularly fortunate in possessing men of the theatre of the very first rank, men who are so closely identified with its finest intentions and interests that their successive and progressive stages of experiment are actually successive and progressive stages of their higher selves. This largely accounts for the fact that the Russian theatre has undergone a great "revolution" since 1917, just as the Russian theatrical community has done. Not only a New theatre, but a new audience has arisen.

Meierhold has resemblances to Lunacharski which are worth notice. He has a strong personality, an untiring energy and a remarkable capacity for work. He is an intellectual with a cultural training. He has gifts which fit him for the part he has chosen to play as a builder of the New theatre and of the social republic which it is organised to reflect. Early in 1918 the plan of the work of the theatre was obscured by events, the outlines of attack and defence which it was to undertake on behalf of, or with the co-operation of the people, were still hazy. They were waiting to take form as soon as the right man should appear to give them effect. Someone was needed to put the struggle

48 THE NEW SPIRIT IN THE RUSSIAN THEATRE

on the legitimate stage in such a way that it should form the seed of the new theatrical purpose that should send forth stem, branches, leaves, blossom, fruit, much as a tree does that derives sustenance and size from the surrounding soil, moisture and air. The seed was, in fact, a symbol of the new social life. As that life ascended into the sun, light, warmth of those better means and material conditions of the world seemingly promised by bolshevism, so the seed would ascend in the order of the component parts contained within it. Thus the seed was the emblem of a complete theatrical unity.

The right man appeared in Meierhold. All his life he had had a vision of an antecedent principle of unity in the theatre. He was aware of an agency by means of which a perfect union between all the visible objects and agents of interpretation and representation and the audience could be attained. He made it the business of his life to attain this unity. He had to contend with the excessive limitations imposed on the Russian theatre during its commercial period, and the powerful discouragement by those who regarded the theatre solely as a place of amusement. Finally after many experiments, various steps and a long ascent, he found himself in an extremely promising situation. Fortuitous circumstances placed him in a prominent position in a theatre of free experiment where he had full liberty and the support of the Government to realise his dream of unity, so far as he could do so on the level of bolshevist materialism.

But if Meierhold resembled Lunacharski in some ways he widely differed from him in others. At the time of the Revolution Lunacharski was an old political campaigner, a veteran Marxist, a firm believer in the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the end and means of bolshevism—a classless society and a class-struggle. Meierhold was a man of the theatre, glancing, apprehensively maybe, towards the violent current of events set in motion by the Revolution of which probably he had no deep understanding. It is true that he had already experienced, in the equally violent 1905-6 All-Russia upheaval, forces and circum-

stances which may have given a political direction to his thought. At that time he first became pre-occupied with the collective idea of putting the Mass on the stage. It was in Greek fashion and not the bolshevist one. But whether or not he came to his new task with a political leaning, the effect of the 1917 revolution on his general outlook was soon apparent. In less than a year he underwent a remarkable change. He accepted and shouldered the full responsibilities of the bolshevist faith so far as it could be done through the medium of the theatre. For the purpose he undertook a new and heavy task. He acquainted himself with the new practical sociological facts, the facts, that is, of natural, mechanical and social science, by means of a proper knowledge of which he could establish the desired relationship between the new social order and the theatre. Proof of this is found in his establishment of studios and schools for the study and application of scientific principles and the production of the citizen actor. Also in his anti-literary attitude shown in his preference for the language of the scientific laboratory, or, as we may say, the science of motion in acting.

The change wrought on Meierhold brought him definitely into Lunacharski's political camp, and beyond this into the theatrical Department of the Ministry for Education and Art. He favoured class war, the dictatorship of the proletariat, the realisation of the Marx-Lenin social ideal in all parts of the world, and he seems to have believed that the theatre could help to attain these objects. But at the same time, though he evidently had a very exaggerated idea of what a comparatively newly-fledged theatre could do in the way of stimulating world-wide propaganda and agitation, he was reasonable enough to believe that the theatre could start from its very commencement to attack the essential problems of collective necessities. At all events his adhesion to Lunacharski and his Ministry brought him a very early opportunity to start work on a wide and important basis known as the October theatre. It should be said that he did not allow himself to be caught in the educational web. Whatever

he did was from the standpoint of a man of the theatre aiming to theatricalise human life. Whatever he may have thought of pedagogical enlightenment, he thought far more of purely theatrical enlightenment. He looked about him and saw an entire and mighty nation waiting to be so theatricalised that its people could be enlightened on its infinite material resources, and instructed in the duty of realising them.

There were the foundations of a new civilisation; an erection to be built in the simplest fashion with new scientific tools; the raw materials of a new collective experience; a temple for initiating the common folk into the truth of these experiences. The common folk, the Mass, must help the temple, or theatre, to fulfil its vital function; the mass-spirit must replace the individualist spirit—a spirit that attracted him once upon a time and no doubt prevented him from attaining that particular whole of which the theatre should be made up. Formerly he had tried to analyse and construct with the finest tools of the intellect. But the theatre cannot live by intellect alone. There are the senses, feelings, emotions. Circumstances had suddenly placed him in a world of the senses, feelings, emotions. By what fitter means, added to his own intellectual make-up, could he attain his end. The Mass must be mixed with the theatrical action, or as some would say, the action of the play, and the theatre must inspire the Mass to regard it as an indivisible part of the common life by mixing itself with the Revolution, the new science and the new industrialism, and the ascending stages of the new social life according to the plan of the new social pyramid.

But the great difference between Lunacharski and Meierhold was in the supreme matter of continuity. Lunacharski believed in spiritual continuity; Meierhold maintained a technical one. Lunacharski accepted the inheritance of spiritual values contained in art productions, plays, literature, and so on, and sought to hand on this spiritual flame. Meierhold used technical processes derived from different sources, Italian (Commedia

dell' Arte), Japanese (symbolism), and others, in his pursuit of means to produce the perfect actor, unity, and the simple, most suggestive, most dynamic and serviceable background. Lunacharski said there is a past; Meierhold said there is no past save that which exists in technical remains of obsolete systems. To live on the past is a symptom of weakness and creative bankruptcy. His denial of the past shown so clearly in his adaptation of classics to bolshevist purpose, took him sharply to the Left. He appeared as the leader of those industrial workers, or proletarians, as they were called, who declared that the past dies, was dead, and in their philosophy had nothing to contribute to the present. The new proletarian Republic must be the result of a new vision of human life and of a new social organisation to be fulfilled by the exercise and understanding of those potentialities in the common folk which had lain dormant for centuries, owing to the tyranny and suppression, the wilful blindness to their human attributes, shown by their masters. To these extremists the dawning of a new inward sun in response to new material conditions was the true light of liberty.

So Meierhold moved to the Left, cleared the stage of all its old lumber. Then he reformed the tools of interpretation and representation. He reshaped the actors by a system of training, scientific, biological, and psychological, and thus fitted them to act so as to incarnate the mass-audience, to reflect and satisfy its curiosity concerning vivid and swiftly-passing events, to exhibit its feelings and emotions. He reformed the scenic tools, eliminated the stupid æsthetic accretions fit for nothing but to distract and bemuse the spectator's mind which German and English pre-war painter-extremists, secessionists, so-called advanced theatrical directors, freak culturists and the walls of French and Viennese cafés had flung upon the stage. In opposition to Lunacharski he strongly repudiated "decorations" of the past and museumy kind. He turned his back on æsthetic synthesis and faced constructive synthesis as a thing of the epoch. He came to earth and found contact with the common folk through constructions.

He rightly saw that erections of wood, and iron, and steel express the spirit of the mechanical age upon which the world has definitely entered. Machines, technology and action are the outward manifestations of the spirit. He realised that the common folk could be assisted by machines to become healthful, vigorous, and to understand and enjoy much of the liberation that had come to them. And he concluded that these new objects arising out of the new conception of social life were the very things to influence human beings. Hence his pre-occupation with machine and industrial-like structures which should serve to intensify and complete the dynamic intention of each production.

Throughout his new career Meierhold has regarded himself as an "artist of the people." Not long ago he was rewarded for the pains he has taken to earn a full right to the title, by being officially crowned with it by an appreciative Government. He claimed that his matter and manner reversed the starting-point accepted in the theatre thirty years ago when Stanislavski and V. I. Nemirovich-Dantchenko founded the Moscow Art theatre, and that they began at the opposite and more human end. But as I have suggested, the reversal has not been so complete as Meierhold claims. It is true that under his guidance his theatre has a wider, less abstruse, and more practical application than formerly. It is a people's theatre. It appears to be reserved to reflect those acts and duties in which the common folk seeking to liberate themselves from an old social order must be engaged. But its break with continuity is not complete, for the reason already given. It still reveals traces of the inspiration which Meierhold derived from classical sources in the course of his long pre-revolution training. It shows indeed that Meierhold is actuated in his present search for unity by two complimentary tendencies, one of the past and the other of the present; one towards improvisation, spontaneity, condensation and simplification, such as are associated with the Japanese stage and the *Commedia dell' Arte*, the other towards the awakening of new com-

munal consciousness to be expressed through the thoughts and actions of the common folk.

A sketch of Meierhold's career and achievements to 1923 will show the chief influences that have operated on him in the past and present, as well as the continuity of past technical phases which express one of the two complimentary tendencies.

The sketch presents the chief facts of Meierhold's development from when he became a member of the Moscow Art theatre to 1923. They reveal (1) the influences which have acted upon him during years of attempts to find new forms; (2) the new ideas and principles arising therefrom; and (3) their application to and in the theatre.

1898. ACTUALISM. Meierhold joined the Moscow Art theatre company on its formation. In the December of this year he "created" the part of Treplef in Chekov's "The Seagull." In February, 1901, he "created" another Chekov character, Baron Tuzenbach in "The Three Sisters." After three years' study at the M.A.T. he left it for a short tour in the provinces, where he went in search of new forms.

1902. He returned to the M.A.T. Finally he left it thoroughly dissatisfied with its method. At this time he was fully engaged with the problem of the function of and response to theatrical expression. To him it appeared that Stanislavski's form of expression confined expression to the stage and drew no response from the spectator. The business of theatrical expression was, in his opinion, to communicate itself to the spectator, and the aim of the producer should, therefore, be to promote increased powers of theatrical communication. This means that Meierhold had learnt that for Stanislavski the audience did not exist. He was satisfied so long as he had a stage and a company to work with. He was in the position of the studio painter who produces little easel pictures in the seclusion of his studio-cell which have no relation to the wider world without it. With Meierhold it was different. He discovered the audience, and his discovery took him from the centre of the

54 THE NEW SPIRIT IN THE RUSSIAN THEATRE

stage to the centre of the auditorium, from the little world of Stanislavski into a new world of imagination and widest achievement of his own and the spectator's.

September, 1902. **CHEKOV.** He made a start for himself, and organised a company. He opened at Sebastopol with the "Three Sisters." He went to other places playing Chekov. He then had a short season at the small provincial town of Cherson, near Odessa. He was trying to rid himself of Stanislavski's actualism.

1903. **MEININGEN.** He went to Italy, where he was under the Meiningen influence.

1904-5. **CONDITIONALISM.** From Italy he returned to Cherson, and then went to Tiflis, where he produced "The Death of Ivan the Terrible" and "The Acrobats," by Chenton. He continued to search for a significant form of theatrical communication, and to examine the existing forms as he met them. Though his work at Cherson showed traces of the Meiningen influence, it revealed that he was now turning definitely toward conditionalism and the Conditional theatre. Meierhold's reason for breaking with actualism and adopting conditionalism, or "conventionalism" as it is called outside Russia, was that the latter was more suited to his purpose of breaking down the barrier between the stage and the auditorium. In his view the new theatrical experience which was springing up did not need the actualistic handling; it was too complex and had far too many details. The aim of actualism to express the "real" life, that is, life as it is actually lived, simply conceals the inner spirit of life. Metaphysically, it holds up the thing to view but conceals the activity behind the thing. Meierhold was of the opinion that a production should exhibit the activity or spirit, and for this purpose should be simple, highly concentrated and abstract, and not heavily charged with details, diffuse and verbose, if it is to be a perfect spiritual communication. Accordingly he sought to put the activity or spirit on the stage in place of the thing or "real life." It is here, he thinks, that conditionalism begins on



ALICE KOONEN

Co-founder with her husband, Alexander Tairov, of the celebrated Moscow State Kamerny theatre. She is a gifted actress of Belgian origin, who has played the principal woman parts in Tairov's successive productions of tragedy and comedy. She, more than anyone, except Tairov, has contributed to the success of the M. S. K. T.

the stage, which it is necessary to develop to the utmost. Conditionalism is then the activity or spirit attributed to a thing. The activity or spirit is abstracted by the producer who conditions all the objects and agents of representation and interpretation with it. For example, the activity that moves us in the "Midsummer Night's Dream" is the spirit of joy. Hence everything in the production must be conditioned by the spirit of joy. So the problem with which the Conditional theatre confronted him was, how to realise the condition of spiritual unity in each play in such a way as to break down the separation between the stage and the spectator which the school of Stanislavski so strongly emphasised. He may be said to have seen the stage from a new starting-point, thus making for a new departure in play-production hitherto so heavily handicapped by old and new forms of disunity. His conclusion was that the new departure was only possible in Moscow.

1905. **THE MYSTIC THEATRE.** He decided to go to Moscow, where he proposed to develop the Conditional theatre. But unfortunately for one reason and luckily for another he chose an unfavourable time. A revolution was just starting, and no one had any time for the theatre. Previous to going to Moscow he had made Maeterlinck's "Death of Tintagel" the subject of his new experiment. He carefully prepared this piece for production at the Studio theatre at Moscow. But the Revolution put a stop to the production. With nothing else to do, Meierhold wandered about the streets and mixed with the revolutionary crowds, and so came under the influence of the revolutionary impulse.

December, 1905, and January, 1906. **MYSTICAL ANARCHISM AND PRIMITIVENESS.** He returned to Petrograd. The influence of the Revolution was to turn his thoughts in the direction of the Greek theatre and its collective expression. He went beyond this to primitiveness, which he decided to apply to Maeterlinck.

February, 1906. **CONDITIONALISM AND COLLECTIVISM.** He now added Greek collectivism to the Conditional theatre. He went to Tiflis for a short season to apply his ideas. Here he

established a dramatic company called "The Comrades of the New Drama." He then returned to Petrograd, leaving the new company at Tiflis. Shortly after he returned to Tiflis to produce "Tintagel" in the new manner. He covered the stage with green cloth, used coloured costumes, followed the decorative ideas of Belkin, and posed the figures.

BEGINNING OF THE MYSTIC THEATRE. He found that the play was understood or experienced by the spectators, and he concluded, therefore, that he had realised the Mystic theatre for which he had been searching as a form of subtle expressiveness.

MUSICAL EXPRESSION. He now turned to develop the idea of music applied to dramatic form. He went into the country and produced Maeterlinck's "Sister Beatrice." He also produced Arthur Schnitzler's "Cry of Life." The latter had a scene which was noticeable for its great exaggeration. Meierhold provided a background which showed the excessive power of things. He sought to make the actors' movements resemble those of a dance. He concentrated on expressing fatal and tragic moods.

UNITY OF ACTION. Removal of the proscenium and the act-drop. He went to a small provincial town and produced Ibsen's "Ghosts." He removed the proscenium and drop-curtain in order to produce that feeling of intimacy in the spectator required by his conception of unity. The act-drop masks the stage. Take away the act-drop and the spectator is immediately saturated by the stage and its contents, and is thus prepared for the act of dramatic communication. This particular aid to unity has occupied Meierhold's attention more and more increasingly. It has been promoted to first place in his present-day productions. But it should be pointed out that Meierhold as well as Max Reinhardt, who is also concerned with uniting the stage and auditorium, are greatly impeded in their experiment by the serious limitations of the walled-in stage. No theatre has as yet been built that in general design, shape, size, scale, sight line and other details is calculated to promote and preserve a perfect theatrical communication between the minds

of the author, actors and spectators. It is time that someone, in addition to making a change in acting, should make a change in theatre design. Of course, it has not been possible to do so in Russia as yet. And nothing of any importance in this direction seems to have been done in that country before the war. The Moscow Art theatre auditorium is structurally an incurably old-fashioned one. The section of the stage seen from the stage-boxes is less than a third of the whole, while from many parts of the auditorium quite 75 per cent of the stage and the play is cut off. But as Stanislavski is not concerned with uniting actor and audience, this does not matter. The attempt to put the auditorium levels on the stage, to which reference will be made presently, does not offer a satisfactory solution of the structural problems.

November, 1906. **STYLISATION.** He became associated with Vera Kommissarzhevski, the celebrated Russian actress-manageress, and continued to search for form and to exhibit various influences. One of the latter was derived from Poland, which he visited with Madam Kommissarzhevski. While he was touring Poland he got the idea for producing Ibsen's "Hedda Gabler," and Maeterlinck's "Sister Beatrice." He was much influenced by Polish colour and the interior of the Catholic Church. By the latter he was led to produce "Beatrice" in the early Renaissance and the Church manner. Probably it also influenced his idea of transforming the auditorium into a sort of church interior.

ANTI-DECORATION. On returning to Petrograd he produced a number of plays, of which three stand out on account of their handling and their success. 1. "Sister Beatrice." In all three he was concerned with "style" or "stylisation" as it is called in the so-called advanced theatre. We hear much of style nowadays in the theatre. There are two kinds: true and false. False style is the bringing together and piling up of splendid cumber for the sake of sensational effect. There is, for instance, the Sir Herbert Tree style of His Majesty's theatre, the Sir August

Harris style of Drury Lane theatre, which exhausts the stock-in-trade of costumier, wig-maker, upholsterer and many more tradesmen, and communicates nothing. There is what may be called the spatial style, the stage conceived as space to be filled with æsthetic vapours, and marionettes looking like flies, or the whole interior of the theatre conceived as space to be filled with the people expressing its ideas of life. Good style is the abstraction of essentials for the sake of theatrical communication. Good style on the stage has come to mean that all which belongs to the real world also belongs to the spirit or mind. It is a psychological attitude. The spectators also belong to the spirit. By understanding this it is possible to convey significant experience from one to the other in a symbolic and suggestive manner. Likewise, diffusion and waste are discouraged and concentration and creation encouraged. Meierhold was concerned with good style, that is, highly effective theatrical communication. His aim in "Sister Beatrice" was to dematerialize the stage in order to express the mystery which he felt resides in Maeterlinck's play, in such a way that the spectators realised it as effectively and intensely as Maeterlinck had done. So he gave it the air of a religious service, in which the "soul" of the congregation is merged mystically and unconsciously, and set unfolding towards spiritual heights. The form he used was the shallow stage got by playing on the forepart of the stage against flat decorative church-like scenery. Further, there was the use of melodic speech, and plain, precise, carved-out gesture. The plastic gestures, perhaps more than anything, suggested the inner attitudes from which they were supposed to spring. Probably this production on the fore stage, and with extreme lucidity so well calculated to destroy the separation between the stage and the spectators, strengthened the foundations of his Mystic theatre.

STATUESQUENESS. In other productions there were signs of a desire to break with decoration and to liberate the actor from the fetters of the background. Hitherto the tendency had been to show the actor in the flat. "Sister Beatrice" shows the actor

carved, as it were, in relief against flat decorative scenery. The thing now was to show the actor in the round. This statuesqueness, or bringing the actor into the open, has much occupied the attention of Max Reinhardt. 2. "Balaganchik." In this production the scene was similar to that of the "Little Booth," by Blok, which also was a landmark. There was a shallow stage with a blue background. The actors had only typical gestures. 3. Andreiev's "Life of Man." This was played without "decoration." The walls of the auditorium were covered with grey drapery. There was only one source of light. The scheme of the furniture was much exaggerated. The make-up of the actors was mask-like. Their beards were as though sculptured. Here the aim was to communicate the sentiments and feelings of a dream. It is noteworthy that only these three productions were successful. They had the effect of dividing Petrograd into two camps. The Press was very unfavourable; many "high-brows" were sympathetic.

1907. MAX REINHARDT. In the spring of this year Meierhold went to Berlin with Madam Kommissarzhevski, where he saw the work of the German producer, Max Reinhardt. The effect on him was to plunge him deeper into the Conditional theatre, the method of which he maintained was the only legitimate technical side of production. His new experience helped him to break with symbolical forms and to return to classical ones. Such a break was inevitable in view of his desire to concentrate on acting, to liberate the actor from the "scene," and to make him the sole intermediary between the author and the spectator, between God and man, as it were. That the actor is light (or illuminaton) would appear to have been Meierhold's growing conviction. A thought of the kind actuated Reinhardt who, like Meierhold, has been searching throughout his career for a true form of theatrical communication. The two producers have a resemblance, though not to the extent insisted on by some writers. They reveal marked differences. They resemble each other in the persistent pursuit of form and in their attempts to

theatricalise the theatre and to dramatise the drama. Both have been mainly concerned with extracting the dramatic essence from plays, and conveying it as fully as their means would admit to the spectator. One difference lies in economic motive. Reinhardt has always sought to please, and this mainly for profit. Meierhold has sought to convert irrespective of profit. Or to put it this way: Reinhardt has aimed to establish a two-function theatre, that is, a theatre devoted to social service, perhaps of an idealistic form, and to acquisitive gain. Meierhold has been more concerned with a one-function theatre, that is, a theatre in which social service in the form of the conversion of the spectator into the likeness of the exalted author is the predominant function. Probably both have been actuated by the transfiguration motive. Probably, too, one was inspired by the glamour of gold, the other by the glamour of spirit.

1907. Later in the year Meierhold returned to Moscow, where, in conjunction with Madam Kommissarzhevski, he produced Maeterlinck's "Sister Beatrice." Pshibuishevski's "The Eternal Story," "Antonia," and "Balaganchik." The public showed a very great interest in these productions which raised considerable discussion. Meierhold and Kommissarzhevski considered this their first victory in Moscow, which hitherto had been openly hostile.

September, 1907. MARIONETTE THEATRE. Another stage in Meierhold's progress appeared in the production of Wedekind's "The Awakening of Spring." It introduced a new method of breaking up the stage into three or four scenes at once. About this time he turned to the Marionette theatre in order to apply his ideas.

INTRODUCTION OF LEVELS. At this time, too, Meierhold appears to have been smitten by the idea of different stage levels. He decided to leave the primitive method which, he said, had brought him back to the Marionette theatre. Doubtless he saw in the use of levels a possible development of the statuesque form by which he sought to detach the actor from the flat scene. He

produced Fedor Sologub's "The Victory of Death," thus associating himself with a movement known as the theatre of the will based upon the idea of a single will—the will of the theatre—dominating everybody and thus producing unity. Arising from the exercise of this will is congregate or collective action such as that experienced by a church congregation. Meierhold's aim in this production was to emphasise the orgiastic character of the crowds. He introduced stairs athwart the stage in order to obtain the effect of the Greek cothurna of figures raised to different heights. Whether by using these stairs parallel to the orchestra Meierhold was feeling his way towards an invasion of the auditorium is not clear. But the approach to the auditorium was pointed out by a critic, who said that if the stairs were carried into the auditorium the actor could then make his escape from the old stage movements, crowds, and so on. Meierhold, however, kept the stairs on the stage side of the foot-lights.

1908. **BREAK WITH KOMMISSARZHEVSKI.** Early in this year he broke with Kommissarzhevski, with whom his relations had been strained for some time. The cause of the break was Kommissarzhevski's complaint that he was trying to turn the theatre into a laboratory. He simply passed from one experiment to another. She told him that by his latest experiments he had almost reduced the entertainment to a puppet show. She pointed out that the Press continually attacked their work for this reason, and had nearly succeeded in wrecking her theatre.

The rupture much impressed Meierhold, who at once set to work to summarise his thoughts in a very important article, "The History of the Technique of the Theatre," the theoretical basis of which were the views of Viatcheslav Ivanov. It was published in the "Tschepovnik."

JAPANESE INFLUENCES. He next went to Minsk to continue his experiments. Here he had much success with Wedekind's "The Vampire," "Balaganchik," "The Victory of Death," and "Electra," by Von Hoffmannsthal and Strauss. "The Vam-

pire" was played without decoration. The music of the moods of the play was given by the Japanese method of music translated by bright-coloured spots. "*Balaganchik*" was played in the orchestra, and the author was introduced into the action. Decoration was replaced by screens. There was also the innovation of the illuminated auditorium. Full light was turned on the spectators because Meierhold believed that it heightened the mood of the spectator, while enabling the actor to see, as in a looking-glass, the effect which he was communicating. The production also had a new conclusion. "*Electra*," and "*The Victory of Death*," were distinguished by the search for line and the absence of colour.

1908. REFORM OF OPERA. PRACTICABLES. He was next invited to produce plays at the two imperial theatres at Petrograd, the Alexandrinski and the Marinski. It is a little difficult to understand why a producer of Meierhold's decidedly anarchistic tendencies consented to accept positions at academic theatres while the character of his work was suited to large and popular audiences. Apparently, however, he was not expected to sacrifice much, if anything. He produced and acted in the drama and the opera, and continued to use the same methods as when associated with Madam Kommissarzhevski. They were the methods of the Conditional theatre. His first business was the reform of the opera. He sought a foundation of movement in the dance, and to unite the methods of the singer with those of the mime. He appears to have become increasingly conscious of the importance of the actor, and the necessity of making him highly expressive by detaching him from his old surroundings and giving a meaning to every movement of his body, limbs and features, and every intonation and inflexion of his voice. He was now clearly of the opinion that in the scheme of the theatre the actor comes first, and everything springs from the actor. As the actor must express himself so as to be seen as well as felt and heard, he must be fully seen—seen in the round, not in the flat. The principles of "practicables" and of levels must, there-

fore, be applied. By "practicables," a term used in the Russian theatre, is meant the lines, the contours of the body and limbs. *These must be sharply emphasised and as clearly defined as in Greek sculpture.* Perhaps the emphasis on "Practicables" was the starting-point of bio-mechanics and the introduction of athletic drill to the stage, to which reference will be made presently. As to levels, Meierhold decided that the floor of the stage must be broken up and rearranged in combinations of levels at different heights. Such were the new tasks of the opera producer. One of his earliest productions was Wagner's "Tristan and Isolde," to which he gave the thirteenth century manner. The scenery was dictated by the mime.

1910. SPECTACLE. He went to Greece, where he came into contact with the ancient world. The effect of this was seen in his production of Molière's "Don Juan" at the Alexandrinski theatre after his return. His aim was to absorb the spectator. So he gave the production the style of the stage, not of Molière. He made it a brilliant spectacle, with the air of Sicily rather than of Versailles, and employed all his "tricks" to unite the actor with the spectator. He brought the former on to the apron stage where not one inch of him could be lost sight of by the spectator. He removed the proscenium and curtain. He flooded the auditorium with light. To his own "tricks" he added some of those of the age of King Sun (Louis XIV) of Golden Versailles. He flooded the actors with light as though carving them with a chisel. He set the scene alive with little black boys whose activities, perhaps more than anything else, added the necessary touch of the affected air of Molière's Versailles.

1910. MASKS AND PANTOMIME. During the same year he produced Schnitzler's "The Scarf of Columbine," at the House of Intermediary. This piece, like "Don Juan," was played in masks, and the acting was likewise brought to the proscenium, where everything logically followed, for instance, bright lights on the actors, etc. It is important to note the increasing use of masks, a convention, by the way, contributed by ancient Greece

64 THE NEW SPIRIT IN THE RUSSIAN THEATRE

and Japan. A development of this abstract feature has taken place in the New Russian theatre. To-day masks are built on the actor's face in a manner that will be described later. This method of schematizing and fixing a visual expression is followed in particular in the Hebrew theatre. The mask of Pierrot, in "The Scarf of Columbine," was designed by Sapunov. This was Meierhold's first experiment in pantomime, and a move in the direction of clearing the stage of literary influences which became more decided as time went on. A further development took place in the production of Gluck's "Orpheus," in which a double plane stage was used, and the proscenium was "decorated" with a carpet. The positions of the groups and their movements were determined by the principle of "practicables."

November, 1910. COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE. Meierhold next produced one harlequinade, which revealed the beginning of scenery on the basis of the traditional scenery of the Commedia dell'Arte.

While this work was going on, Meierhold was seen in his favourite position with his back to the wall fighting his critics. He wrote an article explaining that the "Scarf of Columbine" was his first work in pantomime. In November, 1912, he published a book on the theatre. It was an apology for his sins, for going back to the beginning of the old theatre, to masks, gestures, eccentric movements, intrigues and the rest of the ancient business. But, of course, he was not in the least contrite. At this time he produced "The Ransom of Life," at the Alexandrinski theatre, which set the critics discussing whether the Bastille was or was not taken in a theatrical way. "Electra," at the Marinski, set them arguing about the disharmony between modern text and music and the old-time method of production. After this Meierhold paid a visit to Paris, where at the Chatêlet theatre he produced D'Annunzio's "Pisanella," with "decorations" by Bakst.

Winter, 1912-13. A STUDIO OF IMPROVISATION. On his

ВСЯ ВЛАСТЬ ЕСТЬ НАМ



"STORM"

At the Moscow Trades Union theatre. The scenery is a typical example of the simple wooden "construction" used in the Left Wing theatre. It consists of an adaptable wooden framework, which can be used for a variety of interiors by merely revolving it and putting panels in the frames. The scene represents a Soviet interior.

return he plunged into the organisation of a Studio, designed to teach the principles of the movement and scenic technique of Italian improvised comedy, which was the creation by Italian comedians penetrated by the spirit of their time.

1914. CONSTRUCTION. In this year there were two notable things. Meierhold began the Journal of Doctor Dapertutto, which he dedicated to the theatre. And he produced Blok's "The Unknown," using "construction" for the first time instead of "decoration." This was probably his first break with æsthetic synthesis. The principles of "construction" are now being applied by all the branches of the New Russian theatre. They are described elsewhere. In "The Unknown," eccentric accessories, jugglers, Chinese boys throwing oranges among the audience, quaint things and human figures were interwoven in a fantastic manner.

1915. THE KINEMA. During the first year of the war Meierhold turned his attention to the kinema, with the object of reforming that instrument of expression also. He produced Oscar Wilde's "Dorian Gray," and took the part of Lord Henry. He then produced Ostrovski's "Storm," in "decorations" by Golovin. His aim in this production was to remove the atmosphere of the first production of the play in December, 1859, and to substitute the mystic romantic element which resides in the plays by Ostrovski. In the summer of 1916 he was again producing for the kinema, and revealed his restless spirit in a novel handling of Pshibuishevski's "The Strong Man."

1918. BOLSHEVISM. The story of his subsequent career is the story of his conversion to bolshevism and the new industrial civilisation, and his search for a theatrical form capable of efficiently communicating their spirit and message. That is to say, he was now pre-occupied with the bolshevist matter and manner. His first undertaking was the organisation of the Petrograd Teo Narkomprosa (People's Commissariat for Education), in conjunction with Mrs. Kameneva.

1919. He went to the Crimea to recuperate. Then to

66 THE NEW SPIRIT IN THE RUSSIAN THEATRE

Novorussik, where he was imprisoned by the White Army. On his release he joined the Red Army. Later, the same year, he was appointed director of the Teo theatre.

1919. **THE MASS (OR MILITANT) THEATRE.** The earliest post-revolutionary attempt to bring the theatre into the cause of the Revolution, and to exercise its power of suggestion on the largest scale. In the open-air representations of past political military events, political mysteries as they were called, could be found resemblances to classical motives and methods, Greek initiation, Roman spectacle (great crowds), Mediæval moralities, and pageantry, but touched by the spirit of the new epoch. Meierhold appeared striving to realise a larger idea of the theatre found in its earliest forms, and a better apprehension of its infinite significance. Such striving was a manifestation of his new faith in the theatre, or more correctly a more intense assertion of his old faith. For Meierhold had from the first shown a profound belief in the theatre as a temple of initiation and re-union. But with the Revolution had come a new vision, new concept, new creation of human values. The old spiritual concept of liberation and redemption, the concept contained in the ritual of the mysteries and the theological intentions of the moralities was dead. The common folk were about to pass through material experiences out of which would come a new spiritual concept. Humanity had been brought to earth in order to relearn how to fly. So the paths to be taken by the people in common were those of natural, human and mechanical sciences.

THE OCTOBER THEATRE. Organised and administered by Meierhold in conformity with the Government request for strong opposition to counter-revolutionary tendencies. It was initiated a year after the Revolution with an open-air performance of Maiakovski's "Mystery Bouffe." It consisted of a revolutionary group organised by Meierhold. The group split up and formed theatres in various towns and cities. By such means Meierhold divided theatrical Russia into theatrical military

areas, much as France was divided into economic areas during the war. All engaged in the work of the theatre constituted a sort of Red Army, the function of which was not alone to enable the common folk to fight revolutionary battles over again, but to destroy the conventional theatre and its elaborate middle-class productions, and thus clear the ground for a New theatre with a vital function to fulfil for man, and one capable of performing social service in the fullest meaning of the term. Everything in which heroic romanticism, class-struggle of the moment could be expressed was utilised. This new theatrical game of playing at war to end war took various forms. One open-air battle was fought by the common folk under the leadership of Meierhold on the largest scale with all the paraphernalia of actual warfare. The October theatre has persisted till to-day. It includes all the playhouses in which the revolutionary spirit lives.

CONSTRUCTION. The concept of a functional theatre dedicated to social service and used to assist in solving the problems dictated by collective necessities stimulated two formative tendencies, Construction and Bio-mechanics, or methods of socialising the setting and the actor, and uniting the two. These may be said to form essential parts of the New Russian theatre's original contribution to the present-day theatre's advance towards direct participation in the solution of present-day social problems. The new technical method called Construction was not really new at the time of the revolution. It had already been applied by Meierhold to Blok's "The Unknown," and by Alexander Tairov to one of his early productions. In this earlier form it was a geometric plastic device for showing the actor in the round and as an organised efficient performer. It was associated with the stage tendencies known as "practicables" and "levels," the latter aiming at breaking up the stage and so liberating it from tradition as Appia wanted it liberated. He was opposed to the flat unbroken stage and contended that a floor of varied surface and level would give

a higher interpretative value to the movements and speech of the actors. The stage should, in fact, be set in rhythmic motion. This change was bound up with the æsthetic concept of the setting.

After the revolution Construction changed with the new demand upon the theatres. The difference produced may be put this way. Before the revolution Construction was determined by the actor; after, it was determined by the new society. The constructive form was conceived of in relation to the structure of environmental form. It brought the ideas of the builder, the architect, the engineer, the mechanic into the theatre, exhibited the clarity and simplicity and new materials of the new structural organisation proposals, analysed the skeletons of urban and other surroundings, initiated the audience into their inherent power as expressed by their influence on the common folk, and showed it that it was face to face with a new conception of the surroundings of social life, a new philosophy of living, a new law to determine and dominate the functional form of the many and varied machines of which these surroundings should consist. The surrounding should be the outer covering of the flesh and blood human content. In the new surrounding a house, for instance, must not be merely a shelter, it must be an engine for living in containing all the properties essential to health, comfort, mental and physical happiness and development.

As Meierhold adapted and applied this method it was seen to be not only one that demonstrated the new life in the light of new constructional conditions, but one that continued the task of liberating the stage to enable it to express and keep the people occupied with the idea of liberation and its primary end in accordance with the principles of bolshevist philosophy.

The use by Meierhold of the organic architectural, engineering and machine form suggested by concrete material, iron, wood, steel, and abstract method, erection of skeleton constructions, said as plainly as possible that he had finished



“ THE DAY OF THE TURBINS ”

At the Moscow Art Academic theatre. The theme is the struggle between the “ Whites ” and “ Reds ” in Denikin’s time. The scene shows the struggle between the opposing forces in a mansion of the “ Whites.” An ensemble effect is got by the use of conventional realistic setting and objects. To Stanislavski, scenery still represents a formal environment.

with the æsthetic myth, and henceforth intended to rely on utilitarian shapes to obtain the expression he wanted. It said too that he was making a start at a national style (some may call it a proletarian style since there was so much industrialism in it).

The style revealed a technique resting on geometric principles, but chiefly those of the Machine as the symbol of the new age of mechanical and scientific industrialism. The Machine is actually the best application of geometric principles. Meierhold's inventions and innovations suggest that he was aware that Russia, hitherto so backward, had at last come into line with Western Europe and America and had entered definitely upon its machine age for the first time in its history. In its mastery and use of machines lay its immediate hope of recovery, and of possible pre-eminence as an industrial and commercial nation amongst nations building the new mechanical scientific civilisation. His task was to make the fact known so far as possible by acting and setting. For this reason, and others, he came to be pre-occupied with constructions reflecting the engineer's logical science (or as it appeared later in the Kamerny theatre, the engineer's æsthetic) and engineering architecture of which the engine is the finest example. Those who find art expression in machinery, particularly in the present-day locomotive, will probably contend that Meierhold was concerned with "machine-art" expression. The correct thing to say is, I think, that Meierhold sought to achieve harmony (or unity) as an engineer does by the application of the law of economy, and by mathematical calculation. In any case we find him bringing things material, animate and inanimate together according to their constructive significance with mathematical exactitude and with the logic demanded by the substance of the materials. His method of construction rested, like that of an engineer, on excessive simplification, condensation and conservation, whereby he excluded the complication, even intricacy, and eliminated the waste so characteristic of the world without

Russia, and so much to be avoided by those engaged in erecting the new social pyramid within.

1920. Meierhold's system of bio-mechanics was inevitable upon his changed conception of the construction. The new social purpose of the theatre raised the problem of the actor as a social tool adapted to the collective utilitarian needs of the new epoch, an actor animated by the new co-operative spirit. He must be brought within the functional scheme, made to represent the flesh and blood of the skeleton construction.

Strictly in accordance with the new spirit, Meierhold built up his system on scientific ground. It shows the influence of Taylorism, a method of eliminating waste in human labour; of industrial psychology, a method of eliminating waste in industry; of behaviourism, which attempts to cut out mind and to introduce muscular perception and speech; of Pavlov's reflexology, a theory of reflex action. Meierhold is made by some writer to refer to Mind as "soul." If he really does, he is probably thinking not of the "soul" repudiated by psychology and discredited by materialist philosophy. Theatrically considered, bio-mechanics is a system of brain and body cultivation and control that aims to remove the lack of self-reliance and control found in the conventional professional actor, who is simply a marionette worked by and at the mercy of his emotions, and whose physical movements do not harmonise with his mental ones. In Meierhold's view it was also a method of making the actor a citizen capable of establishing a real relationship to the audience by realising in himself its collective necessities, capable, that is, of being socially useful instead of merely mumbling dialogue.

1924. STAGE KINEMATOGRAPHY. Among the problems that presented themselves for solution by the New theatre was that of the reflection of the excessive speed, variety and ever-changing movement of human life keyed up to the highest pitch of excitement by successive violent and unexpected events. It was a kinema problem, one which the kinema is in fact adapted

to handle. It could be solved by the theatre only by the limited use of kinema apparatus, and by the copying of film methods of representation without the actual use of the film. A solution was gradually found by the use of vertical constructions divided into floors and compartments joined by platforms, ladders, staircases, gangways, etc., which enabled a very large number of scenes to be played without pause, and moving and changing a construction. Kinema screens were introduced to the New theatre very early in its career. They were intended to flash messages and meanings to the audience. These in time became embodied in the skeleton structures, thus adding considerably to the kinematographic possibilities of the latter. Meierhold, ever as changing as his settings, came, in time, to reach a remarkable simplification and condensation of the kinematographic setting. He did away with the stationary erection and returned to the flat floor and then set to work to juggle with moveable walls, a revolving stage divided into concentric rings which moved separately, and a spot light. The open stage became a sort of patch of fruitful soil in which new births and forms followed each other in rapid succession. Or, in stage terms, little settings came and went, took up their positions at different points, and on the whole behaved as though they were living creatures fully prepared to play their parts. Each setting with its actors was a concentration and crystallization of the "soul" of a scene. Leading up to this development was the cruder one of dividing up the stage into a number of little settings—a division got by placing simple accessories at different points where the actors used them as required. By these means he was able to stage the 35 or more scenes into which he divided a play, with a film-like speed and continuity. Such ingenious inventions and their effective use were made possible by the acrobatic system of actor-training which since the Revolution has been applied in the studios and schools attached to the leading playhouses in Russia. The system has given the productions by the New theatre a kind of

exclusiveness. A play produced in Russia in accord with the new traditions and methods, cannot be performed out of Russia in the Russian style unless it is performed under the constructional conditions, and with the original setting and actors capable of using it. It is the fruit of new forces bred by the spirit of the time, and it represents an organic unity. One illustration of the failure that must come of any attempt to produce bolshevist plays after the present bolshevist manner, without the bolshevist means, appeared in the attempt made at the Piscator-Bühne, Berlin, to copy the methods of Meierhold. Bolshevist plays and their settings could be produced but there were no specially trained actors to give them real life, only the professional German actors to give them mock life. Another illustration occurs in the production by foreigners of "The Dybbuk." The production in Moscow was a synthesis of a new and inspired dynamic form. Out of Russia it was simply the usual conventional exhibition of actors speaking dialogue, and wearing long beards to appear venerable. The interpretation of Chekov's plays by foreigners is another illustration.

The kinematographic construction suggested a solution of the problem of stage space. The stage was extended upward instead of outward. Meierhold's search for unity and constructive synthesis and his effort to take part in the mass-production of the sentiment of liberation, were on the lines of analysis and experiment. Hence there were successive stages of the development of construction. A brief account of Meierhold's achievements first from 1919 to 1923, and thereafter to 1928, will show the nature and value of these stages. It must be pointed out that in his march towards new technical heights he had many difficult things to do, and many hard circumstances to overcome. He was forced to work in accordance with the strict needs of the common folk, to invent a flexible language capable of being moulded into the coinage of their world. And he was compelled to work under appalling economic circumstances,

which together with the folk demands largely determined conditions in the theatre.

But provided with the facts of the military, political, economic and social situation in Russia during the early years of the awful struggle, it is easy to trace Meierhold's contribution to the New functional theatre, in particular to that section of it represented by his own theatricalised theatre. The steady unfolding of content and form in the latter reveals a fruitfulness of ideas, a store of inventions, limitless resource in realising his ideas, combined with youthful energy and unceasing enthusiasm, that are unique certainly in the contemporary history, and, may be, in the whole history of the Theatre. Some of us used to be dazzled by the enthusiasm, the exuberance of theatrical life, the amazing adventures amongst masterpieces, the will to produce, of Reinhardt. But vital, compelling and world-influencing though the achievement of the German actor-producer was, fruitful in linking together men of varied cultural interests in the service of the German theatre, and so making the latter the centre and apex of theatrical activity such as no other civilised nation than Germany could show, it was not hewn out of the cataclysmic of the whole people, the paroxysm of one civilisation replacing another, the chaos of war, starvation and death and resurrection, out of the raw material of Life and Death. It has never attempted except in a small degree to illustrate shocking war, revolution, and the worn but life-centred nation arising out of these. It has lacked the human richness, the exuberance of human life, the boiling and effervescing action of the Russian director's theatre, which embodies for the new men of the theatre a new meaning, new ideas, technical and philosophical, that are so needed to remove the dreadful monotony that hangs over the theatres of Western Europe and America like a cloud. In short the steps of Meierhold's progress—the non-political ones—are steps towards the realisation of a richer, more human and fuller theatrical Mecca than Reinhardt once built in the heart of Germany.

It has been shown that Meierhold began his new activities by being appointed a director of the Theatrical Department of the Ministry for Education and that he was put in charge of the T.E.O. He was given control, which lasted some time, over a number of theatres that have come to be known as the Theatre of October. The majority of the theatres, together with their companies, remained under the direct control of Lunacharski who, as head of the Government Department of Education, also exercised indirect control over the theatres administered by Meierhold.

1921. HIGHER STATE WORKSHOPS. To advance his work Meierhold established the Higher State Controlled Workshops (G.R.V.M.) for the study of the new scientific principles, in particular those of bio-mechanics, to acting. These principles were first applied in the production of F. Crommelynck's "The Magnificent Cuckold."

1921. "DAWN." As though to announce the arrival of new things Meierhold made Emile Verhaeren's "The Dawn" his first production, and in so doing revealed his unconventional intentions. The play as written by Verhaeren was a strange mixture of revolution and mysticism, as handled by Meierhold it was the world seen naked through his own revolutionary glasses. He sought to make the piece convey the impression of the dawn of a new epoch from the flame of a revolutionary struggle. He went to work with relentless bolshevist honesty. He revised parts of the play, cut out long passages, added new scenes, and recast several characters. The result did not resemble Verhaeren; it resembled Meierhold in his first revolutionary fervour as a destroyer of old forms and methods, and champion of a new method of play-making that came to be generally copied. He set the fashion approved by Lunacharski of taking a play belonging to a past period and with a social content, and turning it into something of considerable value to the contemporary period, which in 1921 happened to be a revolutionary one. The setting was futuristic, and revealed

Meierhold using the disintegrating agency of geometric abstractions as though in order to suggest the spirit of release expressed by the play, through the dismemberment and obliteration of form. He used this kind of pre-war stylisation as well as an act-drop for the last time. The act-drop was decorated with a big futurist design.

1921. "MYSTERY BOUFFE." "The Dawn" was followed by the second performance of Vladimir Maiakovski's spectacle. It was described as an heroic, epical, and satirical representation of our time in six pictures. In this production Meierhold was joined by the author, a prominent bolshevist poet who had accepted the new regime with all its obligations. As an ardent admirer of the epoch introduced by the Revolution, which he acclaimed as a new form of lyric, his business was to destroy the old world and its methods, and to proclaim a new one and a new technique. "Mystery Bouffe" which was now given its stage representation for the first time, really preceded "The Dawn" in the logical order of illustrations of the course of current events. It reflected the Revolution as The Deluge sweeping away one social order and introducing another. After The Deluge "The Dawn." The story, simply, was that of the change of society in terms of the Flood. The earth is swept bare of all except some reds and some whites. The whites, kings, bankers, and others, are drowned and the reds survive to repeople the earth, and in particular to create a working-class order representing a tolerable community. But the first steps must be the laying of the foundations of a new industrial civilisation. At the conclusion the pioneers of the new civilisation go off to reconstruct the industrial wreckage caused by the Flood. The setting for this extravagant piece was a huge globe representing the earth. The fronts of the theatre boxes were removed so that actors representing the fruits of the earth could line the auditorium. The audience was told that all these fruits belonged to it, and its business was to see that they were produced in abundance.

1922. "THE MAGNIFICENT CUCKOLD." This play by Fernand Crommelynck offered further material for Meierhold's theatrical interpretation of his time, exhibition of new values, and solution of new problems. The production of "Mystery Bouffe" achieved the solution of three important problems: The communication of the meaning of the revolution and social victory of 1917; the conversion of the roofed-in theatre into a Mass theatre; the mixing of the audience with the action. "The Magnificent Cuckold" solved other problems, including those of erecting a big construction clear of the stage walls, and pleasing to the eye, and of making all parts of the construction practicable. The construction helped the principles of bio-mechanical acting to be realised for the first time. Meierhold undertook the task of production in his enthusiastic unconventional manner. As Crommelynck wrote the play, it was a French indecent comedy of sex. The principal character lived in a windmill and reduced the sex question to absurdity. Sex treatment of the kind was not the stuff to set before a bolshevist audience to whom an exhibition of "sex appeal," as we know it, was forbidden. So Meierhold simply ignored the script and turned the whole thing into a bolshevist comedy that enabled him to exhibit bolshevist types of young people expressing a theme in terms of physical culture. In this production he turned away from the "heroics" of the Revolution to present some of the new human types that had arisen since "Dawn," and to demonstrate the nature and use of technical forms influenced by them. The production seemed to be one of the first, if not the first, to express the early shoots of revolutionary culture, and the fact that there was nothing neurasthenic nor diseased in these shoots. Perhaps "eugenics" describes it. The setting was designed to invest the men in blue blouses and one woman, representing the working-class, with the attributes of Olympiads, talking as much in the language of sport and athletics as in a verbal one. It was the first example of mechanical and analytical construction. With the aid of some



" THE ARMoured TRAIN "

At the Moscow Art Academic theatre. Setting for the second scene of the second act. It was this play that brought Stanislavski definitely into the camp of the bolsheviks. It was produced during the "Pan Vassil" Festival at Moscow.

of his pupils of the G.R.V.M. including Eisenstein, now a leading film producer, Meierhold took the windmill in which the Cuckold lived in the French version of the play, and broke it up into a skeleton structure consisting of gangways, ladders, bars, swinging doors, gates, revolving wheels and other practical and symbolical parts, the whole resembling the setting for the ballet "le Pas d'Acier" which was made known to London by Diaghelev's Russian Ballet.

1922. "THE DEATH OF TARELKIN." The next stage of his prodigious task of abolishing conventionality, and of reflecting the great current events in terms of war and reconstruction and of the highly disciplined and flexible human body, was the first introduction of a folk play directly to the stage. He took "The Death of Tarelkina" a piece dealing with the Russian official class in the 19th century, and made a merry, dazzling grotesque of it. In further pursuit of the liberation of acting and the construction, he and his pupils invented a simplified, mechanical and adaptable setting. It took the form of plain wooden structures that could be taken to pieces and rejoined to serve any purpose. Furniture of a schematised kind was also used.

1923. "EARTH PRANCING." This production, also containing many novelties, showed Meierhold at work on the peasant problem, namely the problem of changing the peasants from individualists to collectivists in sympathy with bolshevist principles of class-war. The handling of the theme was another illustration of his lack of reverence for the original theme, and his horror of sinking into the academic, or the corrupting past. The original play from which Meierhold drew his materials, was Martine's "Night" dealing with a revolution in the army. Meierhold threw it into the form of a struggle between revolutionists and counter-revolutionists, into which the peasants were drawn to be converted in the end to a belief in bolshevism and class-war. Technically one saw him still pre-occupied with the new media—mass, movement, mechanical auxiliaries such as

the engines of present-day warfare—machine guns, wireless, and so on, and the tools and symbols of old and new agriculture. He was still vigorously attacking content and form and his great problem of unity. He was making another experiment in the roofed-in Mass theatre, mixing the audience with a bewildering action in a big space formed by the entire auditorium and stage, joined by a broad gangway up and down which army motors raced two at a time. In the matter of form he found something new and harmonious in the great poster campaign which was then at its height. In the centre of the stage he placed a large schematic stationary and adaptable construction which resembled the outline of a cantilever bridge flanked by two towers. It had three platforms. In addition there were two moving structures to suggest trenches, and a reaping machine to suggest the machinery of peasant life. The construction served an agitational purpose similar to that expressed by posters everywhere. In accordance with the spirit of the posters the acting and speech took on a staccato manner. Facts were made known in that brief arresting way which characterises the masterpieces of the hoarding.

The production of "Earth Prancing" brought Meierhold's first or heroic period to a close. During this period he entered the field of immediate sociological problems—the building of the citizen-actor, the enlightenment of the peasant. Thence he arrived at the second period of the contemporary history of the New theatre when the struggle between Life and Death which he had been interpreting was translated into terms of human and social life.

(C) TAIROV. 1917-23

Alexander Tairov is the third of the Master Builders. Like Lunacharski and Meierhold he is a fighting man. He has clear intelligence and persistence similar to those of Meierhold, a similar deep reverence for the theatre and an unswerving resolve to raise it to the highest interpretative level. But in

appearance, training and philosophical and technical intention he differs from both Lunacharski and Meierhold. The first has the assertive and dictatorial appearance of the typical bureaucrat and head of a Government department. The second invites attention by his air of intensity, his concentrated almost fanatical expression of one in passionate pursuit of an unalterable ideal, in whom the fire of a noble purpose burns deep but is seen. Tairov does not invite attention. In him the fire of a fine purpose burns deep but unseen. Not till he is aroused by discussion of his new temple, as the Kamerny theatre may be called, does the fire flash out. Otherwise he has the calm, somewhat retiring appearance of one engaged in a quiet spiritual pursuit. He was trained as a lawyer, and this no doubt accounts for his air of self-possession, for the logic and sense of order displayed by his work. Travel has added something to his experience. It has been responsible, I think, for an element of Eastern mysticism that characterised his early productions. It may have been the cause of the kind of unity that he was set on realising till the Revolution altered his plan. Meierhold took to searching for a unity of the spirit till the Revolution set him on the path of a social unity. Tairov chose art as a principle whereby he could extract unity from all the objects and agents of stage interpretation and representation. But it was a unity of separation. While Meierhold strove to fuse the players and spectators, Tairov, like Stanislavski, strove to divide them and to keep the two face to face. This process of division continued till the pressure of the common folk on the Kamerny theatre became so great that Tairov was compelled to adopt more intimate methods.

A further difference is that Tairov entered the theatre much later than Meierhold. When the Revolution came it found Meierhold comparatively speaking a veteran of the theatre, and Tairov with hardly the theatre in his bones. Still short though his theatrical career had been he had put a memorable achievement to his credit. The year 1912 saw the commencement of

his actual theatrical experience, and not long after he revealed his real theatrical intention as wholly æsthetic. He announced, in fact, that he was about to tread the thorny path of a theatrical revolutionist by establishing a system of æsthetic harmony, the like of which had not been seen in the theatre, nor dreamed of in the philosophy of those who in the eighteen nineties, or maybe earlier, had raised the banner of the Art of the Theatre. What was a strong motive to them was no motive at all to him. He even repudiated the very pre-war theatrical reformer who chiefly, by means of personal advertisement, had taken to himself the credit for all that had been done in turning the theatre of Western Europe into the likeness of a painter's studio.

His original intention of expressing the sanctifying spirit of art in a new way was interfered with by the Revolution which was the cause of his approach to Lunacharski and Meierhold, his ultimate concentration on a concrete social content in place of an abstract one, on a constructive synthesis instead of an æsthetic one. The position he has come to occupy is that of a Left-centralist. As a theatrical revolutionist he leans towards Meierhold and the Left; as a continuator of art values and producer of plays having an art value belonging to the epoch, he leans towards Lunacharski, with this difference that whereas Lunacharski's continuity is concerned with putting a Marxian content, that is, Marxian educational values, into old art frames, Tairov's consists in putting old and new literary contents which formerly he changed to æsthetic contents, and now changes to social ones, into new frames. The frames used to be made according to his system of harmony. Now they are shaped by constructive realism. Lunacharski takes the theme of Cromwell as a puritan revolution, adds a Mass, gives it a Marxian twist and puts it in a conventional art frame. So he makes revolutionary educational history good for the crowd. Tairov takes "Phœdre," a classical tragedy, turns it into a Tairovian play of harmony and melody, puts it in a revolutionised form, and serves it up as a stage banquet to be seen but not eaten by the audience.

Since Tairov took to touring outside Russia a good deal has been said in the foreign Press, particularly German, about his metaphysical-æsthetical theory of the theatre. Some of the interpretations of the theory have been fairly good; more have been exceptionally bad, in particular those coming from America and Paris. He himself has explained his own concept, and the system to which it has given birth in a book called "Zapiski Rejissera" (Stage Director's Notes). But Russian-like he has wrapped up his ideas so completely in metaphysical jargon that they are difficult to understand. His tours are however assisting critics and students of the theatre to understand his notes by showing his ideas in practice. There is no need to examine his theory at length nor to describe his pre-revolution productions except briefly and in a manner that shall indicate the process of the evolution of himself and his system.

The book before the reader is principally concerned with an analysis and synthesis of the theatre after the Revolution, when it came to fulfil a vital function for the Russian people. Its roots in the past are examined as the cause of the new unity, and the component parts are explained at length, and otherwise, according to their value, as the stem, leaves and flower. Meierhold's extraordinary pre-revolution development has been examined at length because he, more than anyone in the New Russian theatre, has always been a close student of the collective theatre idea and was better prepared to take the real leadership in the task of socialising the theatre.

Tairov is a leader with a different outlook. He has conceived a theory which if fully realised would certainly transform the theatre. But it could not restore to the theatre its vital function and thus set it thinking and doing for the people, offering solutions to problems dictated by the collective necessities of the epoch. The most it could do would be to contribute from its stock of revolutionary principles a principle here and there that would help to place the new functional theatre on its pedestal.

82 THE NEW SPIRIT IN THE RUSSIAN THEATRE

Tairov conceived the idea of building a neo-realistic theatre. That name was in fact the one with which he christened his newly-organised playhouse. It meant that he was concerned with the reality of art expression. The concept was perhaps inevitable upon his outfit. As I have shown he has a blend of the philosophic, metaphysical and art temperament, and a predisposition towards mysticism. He entered the Theatre with the belief that art is the root of which interpretation and representation are the foliage and unity the flower. It was Art conceived in terms of rhythm. The actor propagates the idea of his part in terms of rhythm. Clothes himself with it, and assisted by rhythmic music and form attains complete expression. It is as though one said that the fire of Art burns within the actor, that it is brought to the surface by the idea, that it shines and communicates itself as beauty while exposing the dead material side as an ugly little thing. In Tairov's view there is a duality in every man and woman. Accordingly he makes his characters (or used to make them) reflect the two sides of themselves.

This theory of the reality of art expression was a fascinating one, though not of much use for the purpose the theatre was to fulfil. It was also original and revolutionary in the sense that it repudiated existing concepts of theatrical systems, rejecting alike the naturalistic and conditional theories, and embodying a synthetic one of a purely subjective character.

Its realisation called for changes in the theory and practice of acting, of the use of the stage, and of the construction, and use of setting. This means that it called for a new type of actor, a new form of stage, and a new style of scenic environment. It raised the problem of a new theatre building, a problem that could not be solved with bricks and mortar owing to the war. A solution was found however in another way, by transferring the auditorium levels to the stage. The stage was set in eruption, it was set moving in harmony with the

rhythm expressed by the actor and the corresponding rhythm of the scenic construction.

A system of acrobatic acting was devised to enable the actor to make a perfect use of his new environment. Complete expression was to be his so that he might open a new world of interpretation and beauty.

These three matters, the training of the actor as an acrobat, the production of a volcanic stage, and of acting scenery, are worthy of attention here because through them Tairov was actually approaching the post-revolution theatre, which required all three, though put to a social not to an art purpose. His philosophy, metaphysics and æsthetics of interpretation though theoretically interesting do not belong to the materialism of the New theatre. That has to do only with the philosophy of materialism, and an exterior technique, not with the interior technique by means of which the actor was to create an image within him before bringing it to the surface in rhythmic form. Tairov taught that interpretation commences as an inner experience, and inwardly acquires a rhythmic beauty which rises to the surface and is communicated to the body and its members. Given a sternly disciplined Will and a developed Consciousness, the actor is able to control his body and limbs so as to give his movements any significance he likes.

Interpretation through inner experience is a thing with which the bolshevist leaders of the theatre had nothing to do. Their theory and practice taught that interpretation commences as an outer or objective experience. Their audience was drawn mainly from an uneducated class that knew nothing about metaphysics and was told not to seek for it. For this reason the metaphysical side of Tairov's theory early showed symptoms of arrested development.

In view of his early contributions to the New theatre it is as well to begin the review of his career at the beginning.

Tairov's first step taken in co-operation with his gifted wife, Alice Koonen, in the liberation of the Theatre from

84 THE NEW SPIRIT IN THE RUSSIAN THEATRE

existing traditional ideas and forms, was the opening of the Kamerny theatre in 1914 with the production of "Sakuntala" an Indian spectacle, the production of which was not however marked by any striking innovation such as the purpose for which the Kamerny theatre was established, demanded. That purpose was to make the actor pre-dominant in a new way by restoring in his service the true acting nature and value of the stage and scenic environment. Tairov saw that the contemporary use of the flat stage to apply new theories, particularly of an art character, of production, had destroyed not only the acting capacity of the stage but omitted the acting scenery and volumes without which, he maintained, the actor could not attain 100 per cent acting intensity. His predecessors in the theatrical business had, between them, simply flattened the three-dimensional actor to the flatness of a marionette. One of his principal tasks was to transfer the stage to the actor in such a way that it should seem to grow out of him, become an inseparable and indispensable part of him, so far as his interpretative acting was concerned. In "Sakuntala" the flat stage and conventionalised scenery made their last appearance, and Tairov's new synthetic atmosphere its first.

1916. With "Famira Kithared" came the first important development of his theory of neo-realism, according to which everything in a play production was to express an art value. One saw for the first time Tairov endeavouring to attain a rhythmic synthesis. As in the later Russian ballet, the human being was conceived of as the matter of prime importance, and the form of the stage, the setting, the music and costume must accompany the actor and bring out his rhythmic value without lessening his interpretative value, or usurping his place in any way. It seemed that the actor evoked by the theory now under way, was one physically trained to construct any kind of rhythmic unity demanded of him. He was able to dance, sing, play-act, perform as an athlete and acrobat in any species of play, drama, tragedy, comedy, pantomime, operetta, fantasy,

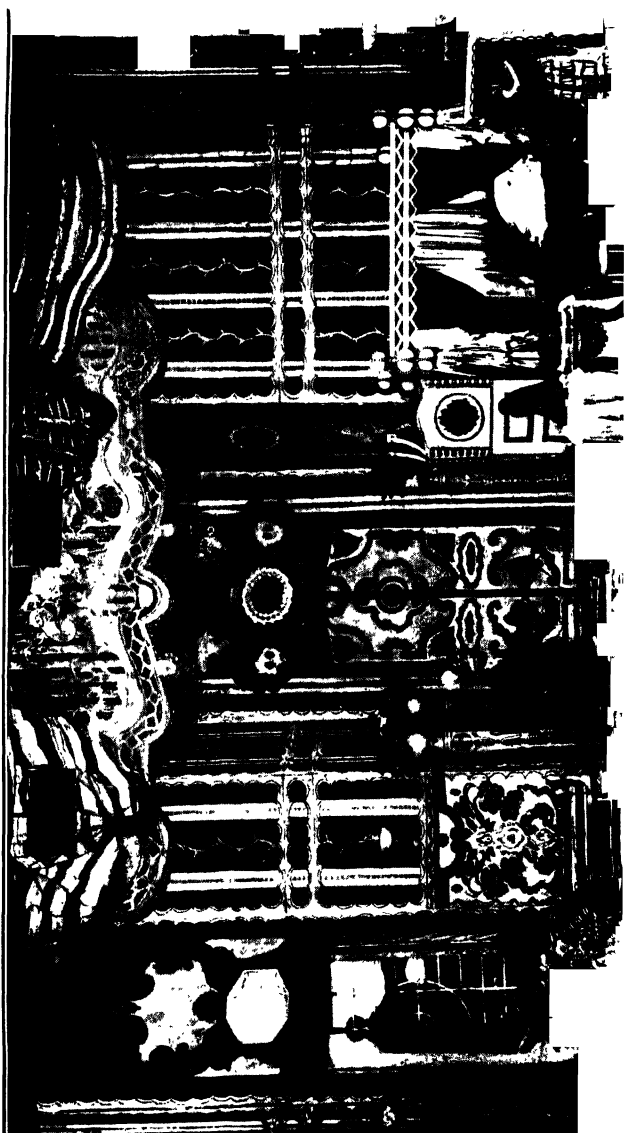
and so on. "Famira Kithared" revealed Tairov preoccupied with the three bases of his rhythmic movement, the actor, the stage and the scene. He introduced his three-dimensional setting and employed the method of staging called construction, which at that time was associated with æsthetics, but since 1917 has become associated with mechanics, engineering and building. He began to liberate the stage by breaking it up into the angles and levels suggested by the auditorium. These were got by means of platforms, stairs and simple movable geometric forms based on the crystal. For a time he experimented with such forms. Volumes superseded painted scenery and furniture. Tairov claimed that such levels offered the best solution to the stage and scenic problem of rhythmic synthesis. The actor by jumping from one level to another, set up different oscillations and different wave lengths of movement.

1917-18. "KING HARLEQUIN." Again the stage was broken up and the setting and accessories took the geometrical forms of the crystal. Domes, spires, pyramids, cubes, all, no doubt, contributed to the particular rhythm suggested by the basic idea. "Salome" by Oscar Wilde showed technical changes dictated by the peculiar rhythmic harmony of the play. The levels were those provided by a broad flight of steps, and the stage divided into two halves, one being raised. The raised portion, which contained a well, was occupied by Salome, and the low by Herod and his courtiers. The stage remained in two levels throughout. The rhythmic movements and gestures were caught up and repeated by the lines of the curtains and draperies, and the classical architecture. By these and other means the poignant spirit of the tragedy was set free. In the production of "Salome" one saw architecture constructed in terms of the general rhythm.

1919-20. During this season Tairov became more and more concerned with stage architecture as an aid to rhythmic harmony. Indeed this form of architecture in terms of rhythm was seen in several productions. In "Adrienne Lecouvreur"

cultural side, and, in particular, to demonstrate their exceptional talent for theatrical interpretation. The great importance of liberation to this kind of expression can best be understood by a comparison between the achievement of the Jewish theatres in Moscow and other parts of Russia—White Russia, Ukraine, etc., under the policy of national cultural autonomy which permitted the use of national language, the development of national culture, and included active Government support of such rights; and the distortion, vilification and repression of Jewish theatrical activities and the wilful dramatic misrepresentation of the Jew during a long period of persecution of the Jew, as faithfully recorded in M. J. Landa's book, "The Jew In Drama."

Granovski has the appearance and air of a cultured man of business. He suggests the capable theatrical administrator and creator of new theatrical values. His manner is calm, dispassionate, calculating. He has, in fact, a commanding personality, and is in all respects a Jew of the best type. He is an experienced man of the theatre, having served an apprenticeship in all departments of it. This has rendered him fit not only creatively to produce a play, but to do so from beginning to end. He is of the type of director with which Russia will make us familiar when its theatrical productions come to visit us as a whole, the type that is represented by Meierhold and Tairov, from whom the note of revolt against tradition is heard clear and strong, and who have brought new ideas into the theatre that enable them to direct and reshape all the processes that go to the making of a unified production. He can prepare the scrip, design the scenery, superintend the acrobatic movements, language, singing, dancing, colour, costumes, all that goes to constitute the atmosphere of a highly nationalised theatre. Though he is concerned with a new Yiddish theatre in the making, one that shall make a contribution to the New Russian theatre while serving to spread a true knowledge of the deep religion, the significant lives, the social customs and



manners, the virility and humour of a race whose world has never yet been wholly and fairly reflected by the drama; he has nothing to do with the old Jewish plays that were born in the seventeenth century, nor with the old Jewish language. The language spoken by his players is Yiddish, the German derived language associated with the enterprise of Abraham Goldfaden, who is called the father of the Yiddish form of drama which he initiated in 1877.

It is necessary to call Granovski's theatre a Yiddish theatre. It is certainly different from the Habima, a Hebrew theatre established by Vakhtangov, in which Jewish religious and mystical plays are performed in the true Jewish spirit and language and with a revolutionary technique. A description of this theatre is given elsewhere. Here it may be said that while both theatres have an aim in common to glorify the Jewish people and faith, the Habima has in addition a Zionist purpose that of leading not only Jewish actors but all persons animated by an enthusiasm for the Zionist cause, to learn and speak the pure Hebrew language.

As a man of initiative thought and action, as a continuator, separatist and technical revolutionist Granovski resembles say, Tairov, not Meierhold. The latter started on his new path with a cry of "Away with everything." Away with tradition, old experience, and the familiar stupid game of illusion. Away with the stage, the curtain, the orchestra and the boxes. Away with the classics except their contemporary social values. Granovski started with the cry of "Build." He came after the post-revolution Meierhold had started his campaign of back to scratch, and was associated with Meierhold in more than one experiment. "Build and Separate," he cried. Build a new scenic stage full of movement to serve movement. Recast construction. Build a new form of expression in actor's technique. Make biometrics more vital than the mechanical system of Meierhold. Build a new dramaturgy. Turn old plays into new plays reflecting contemporary human life, as

Meierhold did with Crommelynck's "The Magnificent Cuckold," and Ostrovski's "Forest." Keep the spectators divided from the actors as Tairov and Stanislavski have done. Above all rebuild the Jewish theatre in such a way that it shall maintain and reflect the finest characteristics of the Jewish people while contributing something to the solution of the new problems raised by the collective necessities of the epoch. Accordingly his work came to exhibit many features with which a bolshevist audience were in favour, and which a Jewish audience would deeply understand, interpretations of the memory, aspiration and tribulation of the persecuted life of a highly-specialised people. These matters of burning importance to two distinct peoples could be experienced in common facts and sentiment, qualities and discipline of social life—collectivism (or Jewish communal society), faith, love, courage, simplicity, unity, discipline, virility, tragedy, comedy, persecution, liberation, matters, indeed, that the liberated Jews and Russian masses had experienced in common.

There is not much to be said about the first period of Granovski's theatrical development. His theatre did not take definite shape till 1921. The seeds of it were contained in a school founded in 1919. Two years later they came to blossom in a theatre organised by Granovski. At first it was called The Jewish Kamerny Theatre of Moscow. Next it became the State Jewish Theatre. And so it took the path of abbreviation now followed, by all the theatres in Russia. It is called M.G.O.C.E.T., just as Meierhold's theatre is T.I.M., the Kamerny theatre is M.G.K.T., the Moscow Art theatre is M.K.A.T., and so on. The conferring of alphabetical distinctions on institutions in Russia is without end.

His productions are few and far between owing to the extreme care and the time expended on them. A play may take as long as two years to produce. The general content is the Jewish national spirit with special emphasis on details of the themes handled, that are of importance to the organisation

of the new Russia. Form rests on principles of unity similar to those already described, a sternly disciplined body and brain system of acting, stage setting of an industrial character resembling that of Tairov's in his later period but unlike Meierhold's stagecraft which is determined by the demands of social and industrial interpretation and representation, but practically untouched by æsthetic formalism. Results show a preoccupation with experiment and a steady and logical evolution throughout.

1919-22. During the first period of this theatre there were four important productions, "200,000," "The Sorceress," "Uriel Acosta" and a programme of four sketches whose titles I omitted to note.

1921. The theatre was opened with the production of "200,000" an adaptation of a piece by Sholom Aleikhem the celebrated Yiddish author. Aleikhem died in New York in 1916 and ten years later his death was celebrated all over Russia wherever there was a considerable Jewish community. It should be said that the first Jewish theatre was founded in Berdichev, Russia, by Abraham Fishon, a little more than fifty years ago. The first performances were given at an hotel under the title of "Gold Shares" in 1882. The Jewish theatre was closed in consequence of new laws that put a ban on the theatre. Jewish dramatists fled abroad where they wrote program and persecution plays. But previous to this exodus a Yiddish dramatic literature had sprung up which included plays of every species, dramatic, comedy, farce, spectacle, tragedy, burlesque, operetta and so on, handling every aspect of Jewish life, historical and contemporary, from the Biblical period to the present one. From this rich store the new Jewish directors in Russia drew much material.

"200,000." This piece was treated as a musical-comedy of Jewish social life having a relation to the existing bolshevist social life. It tells the story of a poor tailor who wins 200,000 roubles in a lottery. He dreams that he is of

aristocratic descent and tries to ape the life of an aristocrat, with the result that he comes to grief much to his own satisfaction. It is another illustration of the old saying, that fine feathers do not make a fine bird. To the bolshevist audience it conveyed the moral idea that association with the aristocracy is not desirable.

The treatment was another example of a classic put to bolshevist use. Technically, it contained the first instalment of new scenic and technical features which were hotly discussed by the critics although Meierhold's innovations had prepared them for this fresh outburst of novelties. There was the commencement of the use of the three-dimensional stage broken up in order to obtain richness and variety of rhythmic movement and to give full value to the three-dimensional actor; of architectural and geometrical volumes instead of painted cloths or planes. The volumes were the first stage of the realisation of the aim to provide different levels and heights for the acting. Besides this there was the commencement of that amazing and painstaking differentiation of types by means of individualised speech, movement, gesture, costume which is an outstanding feature of the Russian Jewish theatre.

"The Sorceress" was a rich extract of the contents of the play by Abraham Goldfaden just as "200,000" was of the play by Sholom Aleikhem. M.G.O.C.E.T. created from the original "Kuldunie" a legend of its own, changed it in an experimental way into its own advanced work. The director-adapter took from Goldfaden his richest materials and added synthetic acting, the sciences of motion-choreography, physical culture, industrial setting, music, folk-lore, etc., which showed that he was taking the creative path of the New theatre, and that his activities in building, construction and mass production of the sentiment of liberty had already begun.

Abraham Goldfaden was the acknowledged leader of the Yiddish playwrights during the latter half of the nineteenth century. His plays contain those human and sentimental

elements that appeal to the common folk of the New Russia. They also contain a great deal of humour and satire and a very rich variety of quaint Jewish types that offer a wide scope to the inventive and creative abilities of both producer and actor. Evidently their delineation called for the use of plastic masks, that is, masks very skilfully built up on the foundation provided by the face. For such masks formed one of the new features of "The Sorceress." The story of "The Sorceress" deserves to be told in full because it is the kind of material which Granovski used to build up his early spectacles. It is the story or legend of a cruel stepmother trying with the assistance of a sorceress to get rid of her stepdaughter in order to possess the latter's inheritance. Granovski treated it as a comic opera story. He divided it into three acts and eight pictures. It opened with a feast at the house of the father of Mirelle, the stepdaughter. There was a crowd of finely differentiated Jewish types. There was much singing and merriment introducing Jewish folk tunes and dancing. Towards the close of this "mass-picture" the father was arrested, no one knew why, and the feast was spoiled.

In the second picture the sorceress entered. She and the stepmother plotted to get the father's money and to do away with Mirelle for the purpose. The sorceress confessed that she was the cause of the father's arrest. The third picture was a market place filled with another exceedingly interesting crowd of finely individualised Jews. The sorceress and her accomplices stole Mirelle's money, according to plan, and the latter was left helpless. The second act opened with another animated "mass-picture" representing a sort of Eastern slave market. Mirelle was sold to a merchant from Stambul for fifteen chervonez (the new bolshevist currency). Then came a search for Mirelle by her lover. This is a common device in comic operas for introducing highly-coloured travel pictures. The second picture exhibited a crowd of picturesque Jewish girls under the hypnotic spell of the sorceress. The news that Mirelle was leaving for Stambul prepared the spectator for picture three,

Stambul itself. Here again was a very effective mass-picture, this time of differentiated Turkish types. Again the comic opera motive was apparent. A man was in search of Mirelle. He offered the Turks a reward for her discovery which brought on a crowd of girls for identification, and finally Mirelle herself. Whereupon followed another "mass-picture," a joyous feast, folk-songs, dances and humorous expression of Jewish oddities. Then came the first picture of the third act. The father had gained his liberty, the stepmother was in a dilemma, she appealed to the sorceress who agreed to meet the home-coming party at Stambul where she will drug them and burn down the inn while they are asleep. So picture two became necessary, and for a wind up it must be as hot and strong as possible to suit bolshevist palates. Accordingly there was the meeting at the inn, the drugged food, the doped party, and the inn set gloriously alight by the sorceress. Everybody looked like being roasted alive when a passer-by gave the alarm, and everybody was saved except the wicked sorceress, who got what she deserved.

What did the proletarians get out of this entertainment? They got a bolshevist motive, the destruction of superstition in the shape of witchcraft, served up very attractively as a folk mass-play, with folk-songs, music, dances and so on. The form was dominated by the mass idea. The stagecraft was considered with a view to obtaining mass scenes with strong interpretative power. Some would call them big ensemble effects of a construction character, maintaining old æsthetic values in grouping and colour. The scenery was the joint work of Granovski and J. Rabinovitch. It was extremely original, and of an unusual adaptable character. It was like a mechanical toy that could be taken to pieces and put together in various shapes. For instance it represented a little town belonging, at first, to the inhabitants. Later, by adding some screens and a chair or two to the setting, the town was shown to be in the possession of one rich man, instead of being collectively occupied. For

mass purposes, the distribution of characters, the exhibition of acrobatic acting, and the three-dimensional actor, platforms at different levels, tall ladders reaching from the floor of the stage to the flies and other unusual bits of builder's material, were used.

The production of the piece took two years, which probably accounted for the extraordinary efficiency and unity of its performance. In no other way is it possible to explain the amazing agility, endurance and vocal acrobatics of the actors, the complete individualism of each type of Jew in feature, voice, gesture, walk, and the minutest detail. Each type was as clearly differentiated from the other as pieces of negro sculpture, yet all were united by an undeniable national affinity. The close attention to individualisation necessitated the use of masks. These masks were not of the ancient Greek or Japanese kind. They were plastic and built on the foundation provided by the face in a manner that succeeded in depersonalising the actor himself, and giving his face an abstract quality which was almost fixed. The grease paint and paste were so thick, and the lines so definite, that the natural movements of the features, cheeks, lips and eyes, hardly made a perceptible difference. In Western Europe and America, theatre and kinema audiences are accustomed to gaze on the naked face of the actor, which is sometimes an ugly thing, and, generally speaking, of no interest beyond its power to communicate facts of the personality of its owner. The naked face worn by the actor in Meierhold's theatre and the Left theatre, was justified on the ground that audience and actors were one, and it was impossible to differentiate the units of a mass of the kind except by such movements and speech as the spectacle demanded. It must be understood that the Russian Jewish theatre was not a Mass theatre in the sense that the Left theatre was.

"URIEL ACOSTA." The third technical development appeared in "Uriel Acosta," a well-known play by Karl Gutzkow, the German author. It was written at Paris in 1846. Gutzkow

belonged to the young German political school of extreme radicals. In his early youth he was much under the influence of mysticism, but later turned from mysticism to enlightenment of another sort. He was particularly opposed to orthodoxy. These biographical facts suggest that a play by such an author is likely to be of service to the bolshevist cause. The play under consideration does indeed deal with a theme of considerable interest to bolshevists. It tells the tragic story of an author who holds a different opinion from that held by the leaders of the orthodox Jewish Church. He is persecuted by the priests, with the result that in the end he shoots himself. Here we have an illustration of that suppression of liberty of thought by the Church which is one of the objections raised by the bolshevists against the Orthodox Church. In their opinion persecution and the denial of liberty by the Church is an excuse for an attack on the Church. A similar opinion prevailed at the time of the French Revolution, when there was an outburst of atheism.

The plot of the play as produced at the Central Jewish theatre revealed the struggle between Acosta and the Church, which is made more tragic by the introduction of a strong love interest. Uriel Acosta was born in Spain, of Jewish parents whose religion was suppressed by the Inquisition. He was made a Christian against his will. Soon after he and his family fled to New York, the new Amsterdam, where Acosta was able to assert his Jewish rights. He was appointed tutor to Judith, the daughter of a Dutchman. An affection sprang up between them. Obstacles arose. One was the former tutor of Judith, the other Acosta's new book, which was condemned by the priests as heretical. The action of the play is concerned with the removal of these two obstacles to the marriage of Acosta and Judith. Acosta is ordered by the Chief Rabbi to recant the opinions contained in his book by destroying the book itself. This, at first, Acosta refuses to do. He defends himself in a long monologue, which he concludes with the words, "Con-

demn me, I am a Jew." The Rabbi Santos thereupon reads the condemnation, which contains a sentence very much like a curse, and says, "the heart of every woman will decline the love of Acosta." Judith immediately denies this, exclaiming, "You lie, Rabbi. He is loved." Judith's father agrees to her marriage with Acosta if the latter will destroy his book. His sick mother and ruined brothers implore him to destroy it. Moved by their exhibition of suffering, he consents. His rival then proceeds to exploit the circumstance, with the result that he ruins Judith's father, and Judith, seeing the terrible condition of her father, agrees to marry the rival. Meanwhile Acosta has been arrested. He prepares himself for the awful business of renunciation, not knowing that Judith has consented to marry his rival and that his mother has died. The powerful renunciation scene takes place. Towards the end the old spirit reasserts itself, and Acosta withdraws his recantation. When he hears about Judith, he hastens to her father's house, but is too late to stop the wedding. Then comes the last meeting of Judith and Acosta. Judith, left alone, finds the weight of her sacrifice too heavy. She takes poison. Before she dies she gives Acosta a warm confirmation of her love. Acosta utters his last monologue, "I am the man who dies in the middle of his career, not having reached the wonderful land of Truth." Saying which he goes out and shoots himself. The Rabbi and a crowd of orthodox Jews enter. They tremble at the sound of the shot. To them it is a prophecy of a terrible tempest.

Such is the story of the play with its bolshevist implications. The scenery struck an entirely new note—one expressing the concentrated tragedy of the play. It was designed by Nathan Altmann to illustrate the principles of space construction. He regarded the play as a form of concentrated tragedy, and decided that the scenery should partake of this character. Accordingly he covered the walls of the stage with black drapery, and in the centre of the space thus obtained he placed simple volumes. These were constructed to occupy a circumscribed

space, with the object of concentrating energy and interest, and avoiding the diffusion and waste which belong to conventional scenery. Moreover, he discarded painters' effects, using any solid materials that helped him in his search for simplicity, concentration, intensity and rhythmic movement, that is, the kind of musical movement attained at the Kamerny theatre, by steps forming contrasted musical intervals. Altmann's reason for constructing scenery on a new principle was that he was dissatisfied with the picture stage and with the kind of illusion sought by the painter. In his view, the work of the studio painter on the stage is calculated to make an impression only on the eye. Nathan wanted more than this. He wanted to organise the mind and consciousness of the audience by visible forms, and so bring scenery into line with objects influencing social activity. He was, in fact, occupied with a new form of realism, which not only describes the surrounding world, but gives you the image of its inner reality. Altmann assumed that the spectator was no longer satisfied with exterior sensations. He demanded accurate, clear images of the emotions and of the soul which certain materials and means belonging to Art can give him. This means that Altmann had done with illusionist forms and painted surfaces. He had done with the paint-pot and wanted wood, iron, cement, or any other solid to work with. He saw the actor actually in three dimensions, whereas the painted canvas only gave the illusion of three dimensions. So he resolved to place real three-dimensional volumes in real space. Such volumes were not designed mechanically to represent things, but to construct and to give a concept of the environment in which the actor seeks to create. Apparently he got no satisfaction from the box-like stage. In his work for "Uriel Acosta" he found no opportunity to remove the walls. So he had to compromise. He covered them with velvet, and thereby pushed them out to infinity. He regarded this work as demanded by the spirit of the age. He believed that the theatre of the Future will be the open-air Mass theatre of the

market-place, street-corner and public square. In pushing the walls of the stage out and reuniting the stage and auditorium, he was simply pushing himself into the street. He was one of the younger decorators upon whom the Revolution has exercised a strong influence. He thought that scenery has a social message, and that the neo-Realist decorator was the man to deliver it. But Altmann came at an early period of the building of the New theatre and his æsthetic-constructive ideas of scenery, Tairov-like in their relation to inner experiences, have since been modified. The common folk are not interested in them.

A fourth change, rather than development, appeared in the production of three satirical sketches which formed one entertainment. At the time when these sketches were performed there were no programmes to be obtained in the Moscow theatres, probably owing to the prevailing bad economic conditions. As I omitted to take the names of them I have no record. But I fancy they were named after their themes, "The Insurance Agent," "The Gossips" and "The Tally Man." The first dealt with three insurance agents who, strangers to each other, try to insure each other's lives and make the discovery that each is an insurance agent. The second dealt with gossip. Two figures were seated on a railway bench waiting for a train. One is a matchmaker who wants all the news about a small town. The other consents to tell the news and says that all gossip consists of lies. He tells everything and concludes by saying, "I have told you all the gossip and you can believe it because I never tell a lie." The third sketch dealt with the success of a hawker of socialist literature in taming a shrewish woman by converting her to a belief in socialism.

There were three simple geometric settings designed by Marc Chagal. The first was an abstraction of a train compartment, two seats running parallel and a curved bar enclosing them. The second was an abstraction of a railway station, a wooden seat, a black lamp-post with lamp askew, and a white signal post with a red signal, the whole surrounded by pea-green

cloths. The third was a more elaborate analysis in colour of a kitchen. The design on the backcloth was similar to some found in Chagal's paintings. Objects were disintegrated and their parts placed at all angles. A green cat was, for instance, painted upside down. I was not sure what the intention of the scenery was, whether to convey by its distortion, and juxtaposition of seemingly unrelated odds and ends, an impression of the state of mind of the non-socialist woman. I decided to accept it as an example of analytical construction, and so left it.

Though this entertainment lasted only an hour, the theatre was full at each performance. But it should be said that performances were not given every night. Owing to economic circumstances the actors were compelled to supplement their meagre theatrical earnings by doing 10 to 4 o'clock Government jobs. This is another reason why very few plays were produced during the first period of Granovski's theatre. The other was, as already stated, the long and patient process of production.

(E) STANISLAVSKI. 1917-23

C. S. Stanislavski, the fourth of the Master Builders, has been so much written about and his characteristics are in consequence so well and generally known, that there would seem to be no need to say much about his heredity, personality and training here. To-day he represents the Left-centre of the new theatre but is rapidly moving Left, at least in the matter of his productions. It may be that he maintains his old conservative preferences but is compelled by controlling influences to take up a radical position. The story of his theatrical life is a remarkable one apart from the facts it contains of a very striking personality remodelling the pre-war Russian theatre in such a fashion as exercised a strong influence on theatres outside Russia. It is the story of how a strong-willed man who was made in a definite conservative mould has been compelled by forces and circumstances to swing round from the extreme Right to almost the extreme Left. This means that Stanislavski is a continuator like Lunacharski, but without the latter's political

knowledge and, perhaps, faith. Probably if the truth were known he would be found to be a bolshevist under protest. This is not meant to suggest that he is not honourable in his new attitude and intentions, but that at his time of life—he is over 60—he finds it very hard to throw off the faith, thought and habit of his early years. He tacitly agrees with Lunacharski in the matter of æsthetic continuity. He treasures old art values and maintains theatrical conventions that serve to make them known and understood by the new audience.

Stanislavski has always been a serious student of theatrical problems. His appearance, conversation, emotionalism, his grateful memory of all those who have served his theatre richly and faithfully in the past (a memory embodied by his shrine-like museum), suggest the true man of the theatre. There are facts of common knowledge which go to support the suggestion. Are we not continually hearing about his distinguished appearance, cultured manner and fine taste, that he is a capable theatrical administrator and exceptionally fine actor with a rare energy and endurance. That he thinks in terms of the theatre is abundantly proved by the autobiography which he wrote not long ago, and that he is a theatrical disciplinarian no one who knows how strictly he handles his human material can deny.

In his early years, to be precise, in 1898, in partnership with V. I. Nemirovich-Dantchenko, he founded the Moscow Art theatre. That theatre was the realisation of ideas and aspirations actuating two earlier theatrical organisations, The Alexeiev Circle, 1877-1888, and The Society of Art and Literature, 1888-1898. Owing to its break with conventions, the Moscow Art theatre is sometimes referred to as a theatre of revolt. Events since 1898 have given a new political meaning to the words revolt and revolution. Strictly speaking in the light of this meaning the Moscow Art theatre began as an insurgent theatre. It marked the opening of the distinctly actualistic period of the Russian theatre, and the only revolutionary significance that may be attached to it is that it unconsciously gathered material to-

gether which was of the deepest importance and highest value to the New theatre that came after the Revolution. Its arrival was really a gesture of theatrical indignation, a protest against the lack of organisation, the selection of subject and its treatment, to be found in the existing conventional and commercial playhouses. The theatrical tendencies of the period were of a most degrading and anti-national character. Plays were bad, acting was worse, and staging was meaningless. This state of things raised the problem of the establishment of a theatre of sense, one that should be efficiently organised, properly governed, and based on a unity and method of interpretation and representation calculated to inspire people, not to make them blush for shame.

A solution appeared in the technical system of the Meiningen Players under Cronegk, and the sociological content of the Free Theatre, (a name given to the Western European theatrical movement aiming to express freely the big problems of social reform of the late nineteenth century and the æsthetic synthesis belonging to the Art of the Theatre movement).

From these Players came, in particular, the ensemble or group system of production and interpretation, an incentive to a more natural method of speaking, and actualism. Actors made a round-table study of plays; the individual actor was subordinated to the whole; actors played alternatively big and small parts; there were no stars. Correct atmosphere was produced as nearly as possible by very careful attention to actual details after the manner of the small Dutch masters. From the Free Theatre came an incentive to sociological expression in the form of plays with a sociological content of value to the sociologist of the future as throwing light on the moral and scientific thought and action prevalent in Europe during the latter half of the 19th century.

There is no evidence that Stanislavski was aware that his theatre was expressing sociological reform or throwing light on the decay of Russian society and the decline of Tsarist power

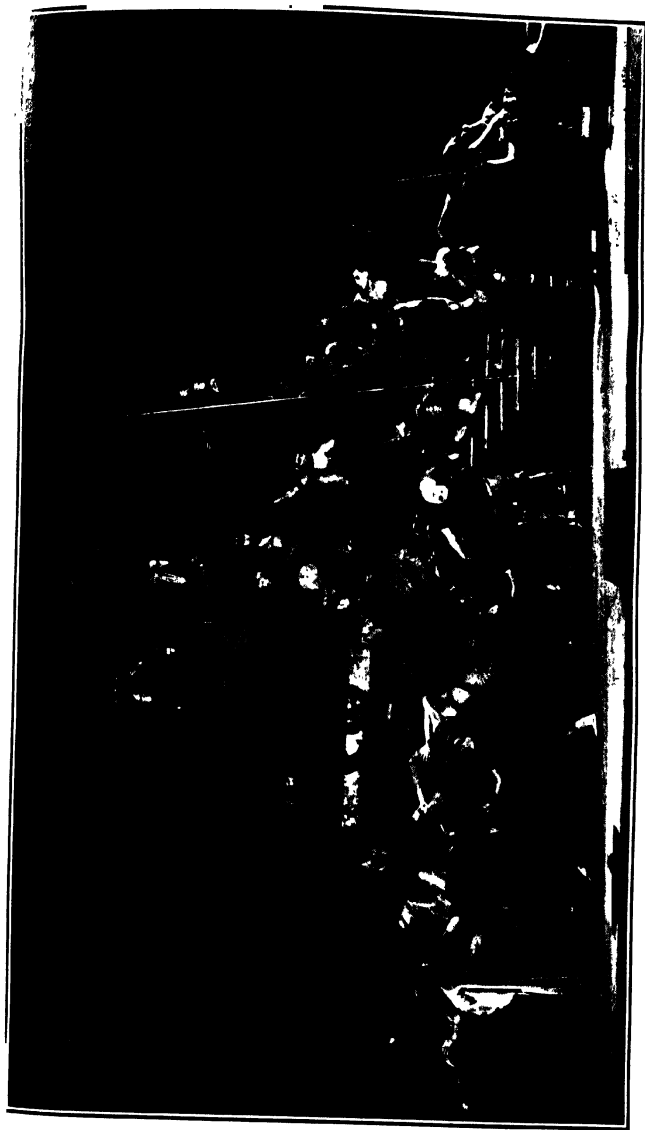
during the 19th century. He seems to have been moved by art and to have been actuated in his choice of plays by the desire to produce a better class of play than was to be found in the commercial theatres, one best suited to the exploitation of new technical values upon which he was set. All the same he became immersed in sociological expression as an analysis of his repertory can show. It should be called the expression of tendencies towards individualistic sociology fashionable in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—tendencies that is, to explore and make known the cause and nature of political oppression and social decay. At that time social reformers interpreted and expounded contemporary scientific thought and conceptions and reforms of society and the individual, as matters of personal opinion. Russian playwrights, for instance, moved by religious, moral, political and social evils to indignation and protest, wrote from their own point of view, spoke for themselves, expressed their own outraged feelings. They did not call attention to the rottenness and backwardness of Russian society, the prevailing feeling of futility, of gloom and despair, from the point of view of the Russian people themselves.

The expression of tendencies towards collective sociology became fashionable after 1917. The problems dictated by individualistic necessities were replaced by those dictated by collective necessities. Intellectuals seeking to bring about a reform of society on a basis of intellectual government, seeking, that is, to direct society to take the paths that they themselves considered desirable, were replaced by intellectuals who assumed a bolshevist mentality—appeared as representatives of the people, revolutionists and scientific workers, whose business it was to bring about a revision of social values as dictated or suggested by the Mass. But by a stroke of irony the fashionable tendencies towards sociology expressed by the Moscow Art theatre in pre-revolution time, were adequate to express the sense and meaning of the new mass sociology which the Moscow Art theatre was called upon to reflect in post-revolution time. In

other words, a part of the pre-war repertory of the Moscow Art theatre became very good bolshevist propaganda.

The current tendencies towards sociology in contemporary thought were originally expressed by the Moscow Art theatre in successive productions of Russian and Western European classics, romantic, and latter-day significant plays. Russian productions contributed historical tendencies, "Tsar Feodor," "Antigone"; religion and mysticism, Dostoevski, "The Brothers Karamazov"; political, radical and anti-bureaucratic tendencies, Gogol's "Revizor," and many plays by nineteenth century dramatists with established reputations. Social reforms, changing class-society tendencies, Chekov with his pictures of change and decay, Gorki's Tolstoi-like Christian socialism in "The Lower Depths," and so on. Foreign plays contributed many sociological tendencies. For instance, Ibsen's with their exposure of social lies, their emphasis on marriage reform, the liberation of woman, the meaning of sex relation and the pathology of sex ("Ghosts"), together with the many and varied plays of a strong radical bent, inspired by them.

That content, together with the influence of the Meiningen Players technique, and of the æsthetic-synthesis movement which originated with Wagner's attempt to attain unity of sound, movement and colour, no doubt were responsible for Stanislavski's concept of form. He agreed with Tairov and Granovski in separating the actors from the audience, and not mixing the audience with the action as Meierhold came to mix it. To him the stage was a world in itself. Stage space must be occupied by a transcript of real life. Occasionally he experimented with formalism, and German symbolism, and the English and American vague meaningless tendencies towards the "Art of the Theatre," but on the whole he preferred to have greatness thrust upon him by minute and definite actualism. He differed from Tairov and Granovski in matters of characterisation, the use of the true text as it appeared in the play, the breaking up of the flat stage, and method of obtaining atmosphere. He con-



"ANTIGONE"

By Walter Hasenclever, at the Moscow Academic Kamerny Theatre. One of the most recent productions at this theatre, and a development of concrete realism. The play is a revolutionist's interpretation of a classic theme. Tairov makes the spirit of art in alliance with the social spirit, dominate. Movement, colour, especially in costume, sound, form, composition are designed to give complete single and simple rhythmic expression to a content which has a social meaning for to-day

tended that the actor can express only that emotion which he had actually experienced in his own life; he must live on the stage through his own emotions and not those of the audience; the latter are merely spectators. He told the actor he must forget that he is on the stage. [Tairov told him he must remember nothing else. Meierhold told him he must remember that he is one of the audience.] The text, dialogue and the atmosphere created by the author must be faithfully rendered with hair for hair fidelity.

He owed his early success to the novelty of his break-away, the attraction of his policy and method, as well as to his brilliant talents. He gathered round him a number of ambitious students who surrendered themselves to his policy, ideas of training, and actualism. Later, however, some grew tired of his actualism and broke away from him to apply theories of their own. Meierhold and Tairov were two of the most noteworthy of the secessionists. They deserted the photographic path for more adventurous paths. But strange to say, all three came back in later years to a common path of constructive synthesis which Meierhold had made popular. It was Meierhold and his Left-Wing that then became the magnet.

For a few months after the Revolution there were no perceptible changes in the organisation, administration, policy and method of the Moscow Art theatre, save two. There was no time to produce new plays. In the old days as much time as eighteen months or two years was spent on the production of a play. There was one Shakespearean play that took three years to produce. Another change was that some of the most important plays in the theatre's repertory ceased to be performed, owing to the fact that they could not be adapted to new requirements. Fortunately, a number of plays were suited to bolshevist needs. This circumstance, together with the recognition by the Government of the high status and cultural value of the theatre, saved its life. Plays by Shakespeare and Ibsen dropped out together with many by pre-war Russian writers, including Tolstoi.

Chekov was barely represented. "The Seagull," the play that made the theatre famous, took flight, leaving nothing behind but its impress on the drop-curtain. Play motives that served during the Tsarist regime to amuse the fashionable audience were now used to indict that regime and excuse its overthrow. It did not matter that the plays were well written and their literary merits were strong evidence in support of the cultural value of the old regime. What mattered was that the Revolution had destroyed the old moral and literary tendency in the theatre. The new tendency was anti-literary. The Mass was unskilled in literature. The proletarians regarded literary plays with suspicion as social poison made palatable by fine literary craftsmanship. They wanted their own life, the struggle for liberation, transferred to the stage in its own terms—terms of movement and rapid change. At the same time, whilst there was a lack of new plays the Government decided to permit the performance of some pre-war plays of literary value because they had the bolshevist and sociological value of throwing light on the rotten features of the Tsarist regime.

In this way the expression of tendencies towards individualistic sociology fashionable in pre-war days became the expression of bolshevist ideology. The one represented the sociology of class-society; the other the sociology of the bolshevist society moved by the doctrine of historical materialism. Chekov's pictures of the suicidal tendencies of class-society were accepted by the new audience as evidence of the dying world of the middle class and capitalism and of the inevitableness of a new and vital world of young proletarians. Broadly speaking, the Moscow Art theatre has been engaged from the outset of its new career with the great religious problem of Life and Death. At first it reflected the decay of one social order, and suggested the sociological problems of a diseased and misgoverned world, as handled by Russian playwrights touched by social indignation. Of late it has reflected the construction of a new social order and the sociological problems of a bolshevist-governed

world as handled by bolshevist playwrights touched by social aspiration. Significant playwrights have arisen. One is startled by their vision and virility. They express a reaction against the old social order, against the kind of civilisation that could produce such an order. They denounce old days and ways and they announce new ones. Significant new playwrights have entered the Moscow Art theatre, but as will be shown they are charged by the watchful Left Wing with being reactionaries to the old social order. They may be called Proletarians-Looking-Both-Ways, for they treat their subjects in such a manner that no one knows who they are for—Whites or Reds.

When everything is considered, it is not extravagant to say that the Moscow Art theatre has, from the commencement of the regime which was meant to be not only the foundation but the builder of a new social pyramid, a helper (willing or otherwise) in the latest thrust for social liberation. Though it is regarded as a classic, it has undergone changes which have closely identified it with the aims and end of the New theatre. From being a theatre that fulfilled a narrow function for a limited class-society it has become an organic part of a theatre that fulfils a vital function for the whole of the Russian people.

Those changes, in particular the economic ones, deserve to be considered in detail because they show how a pre-war theatre bred by the reaction against the commercial theatre yet possessing a commercial and dividend-paying constitution became a non-commercial institution resting on a popular co-operative basis. Like most of the "Art Theatres" in Europe and America, the Moscow Art theatre was founded on a sound business basis, and the statutes of the co-operative society, which it actually formed, were similar in structure to those which govern and defend many sound business and corporate enterprises. The details of the objects, rights, and financial responsibilities of this theatrical co-operative society; its composition, and the rights and liabilities of its members; its resources; have been explained from time to time. They need not be given here. The busi-

ness of the general meetings, the composition and function of the general Council and Direction, were on the line of most business corporations and limited liability companies. This business side was well looked after by Nemirovich-Dantchenko; the spiritual side (which yielded the term Art theatre) was the concern of Stanislavski.

That constitution was an effective means of putting the Moscow Art theatre on its feet and keeping it upright till revolutionary forces and circumstances appeared to destroy this financial support and to demand a new collectivist one. The new regime founded on the principle of doing away with money as a means of exchange was not going to tolerate the re-establishment of theatres on financial co-operative, limited liability and patented structures. It aimed to destroy the innovations and vestiges of the financial age. So came the question, how could the constitution be altered in agreement with bolshevist principle. The answer was do away with the box office and financial interest. The very notion of the Theatre without a box office would appear a sign of stark madness to those who own and govern theatres outside Russia. Still, the box office had to go and the rest of the old financial machinery.

Actual events show that the M.A.T. organisation underwent several changes on the economic side, as the Revolution turned the working-class into the dominant class, completely destroyed the relations between business concerns and the shareholding public, and the ideas of workers' control and the abolition of money came into practice. Here are the parallel stages of the changes. (1) Land, houses and factories were nationalised in turn. There was an interval between each, and for the first few months of the Revolution the M.A.T. organisation was unaffected. With the nationalisation of houses all the theatres were requisitioned by the Government, workers' theatre soviets were formed. There was a radical change in the basis of economic policy, trade-unionism became compulsory and general, and all engaged in the theatre became automatically members of the

All-Russia Union of Art Workers. (2) With the coming of nationalisation the M.A.T. shareholders disappeared, and the money they had invested disappeared also. The shares fixed at from 4,000 to 8,000 roubles became worthless, and the shareholding side of the M.A.T. co-operative society ceased to exist. The status of the actor changed. Under the new industrial regime he became a worker and a trade-unionist. Economically he was supported by the Government. In return for his expenditure of energy he received food, clothing, and shelter. So instead of being a member of the corporate body of the M.A.T. and receiving a part of its financial life-blood in the form of dividend-bearing shares in proportion to his ability, he became part of the new State machine designed to change the Russian Mass from a subject to a master people. Instead of being expected to take part in a theatrical exhibition which was a mere illusion, he was expected to expend his energies in all fields of activity to which they humanly belonged. He was to play in the theatre, in the street, in the market-place, wherever the new idea of social service took him. (3) The no-money period when salaries, box office takings and money payments of all kinds disappeared. A system of tickets was introduced. The tickets were handed over to the trade unions and by them distributed to the worker-public. By this time the old theatrical economic organisation had gone completely overboard. Shareholders, dividend-hunters, wage-earning players, salaried directors, chartered theatrical undertakings resting on lawyers, and designed to acquire vast properties and premises necessary for their financial operations, all these vanished. (4) Then came the New Economic Policy period, when the Government finding itself no longer able to support all the members of its vast household, began to turn them out of doors to shift for themselves. Permission was given for the re-opening of theatres under private management. The M.A.T. re-opened its box office and salary list and resumed its financial organisation; but no longer on the old basis. By this time no one in Russia had any money except for hand-to-mouth purposes. All

that the M.A.T. had for its upkeep and working expenses, including rent to the Government, was the payment for seats and a small subsidy from the Government, in return for which the latter received a number of seat tickets. To-day the Moscow Art theatre lives on its takings and the Government subsidy. Its original economic organisation no longer exists. Stanislavski is in receipt of a small allowance from the Government. Whether this will ever return depends on many things, among them the revival in Russia of a system of capitalising business undertakings and the capacity of the M.A.T. to live long enough to participate in that event.

The spiritual organisation had a different fate. It partly survived the struggle and shock of the Revolution. The actualistic method of interpretation and representation found favour with the common folk. The round table method of studying a play found favour with workers' theatrical organisations. The system of actor training was not interfered with. The selection of plays passed from the absolute control of Nemirovich-Dantchenko to that of a committee, at first wholly, and later partly composed of Government representatives. The old form of psychical actualism (i.e., the reproduction by an actor of his own emotions) persisted because in no other way could the atmosphere of the old actualistic plays be reproduced, but the kind of psychology to which Stanislavski turned, the reproduction of mental states with which he experimented in his search for a scientific system of acting, disappeared with the plays, such as Dostoevski's, to which it was applied. The idea implicit in this system that the actor must substitute something of his own for something the author has given him, was of no use at a period when the audience regarded the actual social content of plays as the main thing which must be communicated to all by the actor, or by members of the audience to each other.

It will be gathered that the story of the Moscow Art theatre during the first period of its post-revolution life was very different from that of the three other theatres already described. There

was not a similar battlefield effect obtained by the feverish untiring effort to extract live plays bursting with the wild social content of the epoch, from stark and livid corpses, and to develop a fiery volcanic stage and heaving dynamic scenery to release the energy of human bodies trained to give an unparalleled exhibition of interpretative movement. No flame of vital experiment issued from the M.A.T. during the days of civil war, intervention, blockade and starvation. It was solely engaged putting its old repertory cupboard in order and existing as best it could. Its main business was to find a sociological bone for the new society, in other words to extract a social content that should please the new audience. There may have been a process of development in this kind of activity. Under a mass of individualistic material was hidden material likely to serve a bolshevist regime. Time would be required to bring it all to the surface. How this was done may best be seen by reference to the list of Moscow Art theatre productions arranged in chronological order in the appendices.

The story of the first period is a short one. On the 26th of September, 1917, that is, just before the Bolshevik revolution, there was one production, Dostoevski's "The Village Stepanchikovo," in which the author temporarily abandons his attitude of looking for God. In 1918 there was no new production. In the spring of 1919 Katchalov and a part of the Moscow Art theatre company set out on a long tour which led people outside Russia to presume that he had joined in the general exodus from that country, but in 1922 he returned to the fold. In 1920 there were two new productions, Lord Byron's "Cain" and Lecocq's "The Daughter of Madam Angot." These two pieces showed the Moscow Art theatre moving steadily towards the goal of co-operation with the revolutionist bolshevist forces. "The Daughter of Madam Angot," like "The Two Orphans" which Stanislavski produced at a much later period, was written at a time of revolution, and "Cain" had much to recommend it to the mind of a public still violently troubled by the con-

cussions of revolution and war. In 1921 came the production of Gogol's "Revizor" and the revival of Chekov's "Uncle Vanya." Ostrovski was another link with the Mass. He found wide favour on account of his castigation of the uneducated merchant class, just as Little Chekov (a name given to Chekov as a writer of little satires) was widely popular with the worker players in club and other small theatrical organisations. In 1922 Stanislavski and his company set out on their travels which lasted till the autumn of 1924.

This long tour was made with the approval and support of the Government. The repertory was chosen with the approval of the Government. The objects were advertisement and recognition. The performance of plays by the genuine Moscow Art theatre company was a means of calling attention to the great advance made by Russia in theatrical interpretation and representation, and the backwardness of other nations, in particular America, in comparison with this advance. The opinion put forward in more quarters than one that the Moscow Art theatre company was, during this tour, revitalised by being brought into contact with commercial organisations and administrative systems outside Russia is too foolish for words. The theatre has given much to other theatres, but has received nothing of lasting value in return. The attempt by foreign impressarios to exploit it was bound to be a financial failure simply because it does not lend itself to exploitation of the kind. It is a Russian growth, it represents the Russian spirit, and cannot be grafted on to a foreign shoot. It must be let alone by those queer converting minds that are disposed to reduce all national cultural things to caricatures by grafting on foreign processes which do not harmonise with their pre-established fitness for service.

The aim of recognition was to restore international relations as far as possible. The Russian touring companies, like the French, Italian and others, were ambassadors charged with the task of developing good will wherever possible. It was a

hard task because while there had been an increase of information of the New Russian theatre through outside channels, there had been no corresponding increase of the means of obtaining such information first hand. But one or two reliable theatrical experts had entered Russia and they were suspected by people outside of praising a new theatrical system that did not exist. As a result, the Russian touring companies, and in particular the Moscow Art theatre company (the real one not the Prague Moscow Art theatre company), were regarded as faked samples of a new theatrical organisation whose real purpose was to undermine the existing social order. In other words, they were looked upon as bolshevist propagandists. Whether this suspicion was justified is a matter of opinion. To me these touring companies were of much value to the sociologist in throwing a light on the mental conditions of the new Russian society. We have only to study the plays performed by the Moscow Art theatre company since 1917 to realise how much they expressed the ideology of the new society. In them the sociologist will find the kind of history, philosophy, religion, morality, æsthetics, politics, economics and social relations, courtship, marriage, the family, etc., that are the ingredients of a new and human sociology in Russia to-day.

Examine from the present Russian point of view one or two plays performed by the Moscow Art theatre company on tour. "Lower Depths," by Gorki, is social philosophy based on religion, Tolstoi's christianity. It exhibits the sociological effect of the industrial and financial ages in the creation of an underworld of thieves and prostitutes. The plays of Chekov, the continuator of Turgenev, the writer of the decay of the intellectual middle class, are plays of gloom, depression and hopelessness. "Tsar Feodor," by A. Tolstoi, exhibits a king as a saintly clown. It deals with the subject of kingcraft and has a historical sociological value.

In these we find: 1. The present reaction to social conditions that hastened the Revolution. There is also a reaction

114 THE NEW SPIRIT IN THE RUSSIAN THEATRE

against Tolstoi's christianity, shown in the protest by the young proletarians against the performance of "Lower Depths" in the early days of the new regime. They disliked the turning of the cheek attitude and passive resistance. 2. The reaction to the exhibition of social conditions that justify the material triumph of bolshevism. 3. The reaction against kingcraft and autocratic rule, set up by the material triumph of bolshevism.

Such is the light thrown by plays toured on the mental attitude of the common folk in present-day Russia.

CHAPTER VII

THE THREE GROUPS. 1918-23

IN my former book on the Russian theatre I dealt with the subject under the three political divisions into which, at the time of the writing of the book, it fell. Left, Centre, and Right. In the Left, I placed Meierhold's group of theatres, the proletcult and the numerous working class theatrical organisations. In the Centre I placed the group of academic theatres directly controlled by Lunacharski, and leaning to the Left-Centre insurgent theatres of the Jewish and Tairov kind. In the Right division I placed Stanislavski's theatre, and others that seemed to lean more to the Right-Centre.

After the book had been published and circulated, this grouping came to be accepted, even in Russia, as a means of distinguishing not the aims, for all theatres had a common bolshevist aim, but the different methods and materials used in realising the aims. One group was in furious reaction against the old order and rejected compromise of any sort, even going so far as to repudiate the past by every means in its power, including the theatre. Another was in reaction against the old order and sought to change the cultural side by the method of gradualness. The third was in reaction to the new social order but still under the influence of the old one, and appeared stationary in the theatre save that the plays performed stimulated current hatreds and aspirations.

I expressed the opinion in my earlier work that the three divisions were not likely to be permanent. I observed signs of the beginning of a general movement to the Left. My observation was noticed in Moscow and was used to acquaint visitors

116 THE NEW SPIRIT IN THE RUSSIAN THEATRE

who had read my book but were too bashful to say so, with the situation in the New theatre. The result has been that I have had the pleasure of reading my original observations in interview articles purporting to be exclusive official information supplied by the bolshevist Government.

My prophesy, as I may call it, of a continued movement to the Left has become fulfilled. In the interval between 1923 and 1928 the various parts of the theatre have come together and it is no longer correct to speak of a three-fold theatre. Changes have arisen which make it necessary to examine the New theatre from a different angle, to reorganize it on a corporate plan. This fresh analysis and synthesis enforced by the movement of a live theatre towards unity is, as I have pointed out, mainly responsible for the present book.

But in order to complete the story of the builders, their methods and materials, belonging to the first period of the building of the New theatre, it is necessary to employ the three-fold method of analysis. For the Lesser Builders were actually under the influence of the five Master Builders, who are really to be identified with three groups.

CHAPTER VIII

THE LEFT GROUP. 1917-23

A. LARGE ORGANISATIONS

(1) LESSER LEADERS

THE Left Group was originally formed to express the more violent and exclusive side of the aim of the new spirit. It affirmed the principles for which the Revolution was fought, and exhibited unswerving faith in the possible victory of the form of socialism taught by Lenin and his followers. Its first main business was to clear the ground of old imperialist and socialist cumber by putting the Revolution and class-war and the facts of the great struggle on the stage. "Bolshevism in Our Time" may be said to have been its cry. Its assertion of the new spirit in the Russian theatre, its task, that is, of restoring to the theatre a vital function that it should fulfil for the Russian people has throughout been maintained. Its influence on the Centre and Right has remained unbroken. Owing to this persistence, to watchfulness during the stages of the building of the theatre erected according to Lenin's plan, to powerful protests against the efforts of reactionaries to undermine the power of the theatre, the common people have come to establish themselves firmly behind the New theatre.

The story of the Left Group is, then, the story of an organised effort to consolidate the political power and the liberation won with the aid of the theatre. The Left theatre has not Lunacharski's cultural-educational purpose, nor Tairov's art purpose, nor Granovski's nationalistic purpose, nor Stanislavski's conservative purpose. Like Meierhold's theatre it is based on the expression of the new mechanical age, of the change

118 THE NEW SPIRIT IN THE RUSSIAN THEATRE

over to agriculture on collective mechanical lines, of the propagation of large scale collective industrialism according to the latest technical methods, and of the realisation of Lenin's proposal to electrify the whole of the country. In other words, in addition to throwing light on the task of sweeping away old and new obstacles dangerous to the bolshevist regime, it aims to enlighten the masses on the nature, value and urgent necessity of productiveness. Therein lies its value to sociologists. It has much to reflect belonging to the important field of practical sociology.

This Left Group theatre is not rich in big personalities. During its first period it was mainly a theatre for the Mass, toilers, soldiers, sailors, and students to whom the struggle for liberation strongly appealed. Leadership was vested in councils and soviets. Performances were given in any enclosed place that accommodated from fifty to a hundred persons. There were some larger theatres, including the Meierhold group and the Proletcult theatre. During the second period these small organisations became centralised in big theatres and there was a corresponding increase of individual directors. They will be considered later.

Four men of importance called forth by the theatrical needs of the working-mass were Meierhold, Eisenstein, Pletnev and Foregger. The four presented striking contrasts in personality combined with an unusual harmony in policy and method. Meierhold had the vision, the dynamic power, the persistence of purpose, and the tremendous momentum of revolutionary achievement, one may say, of the fanatic. Eisenstein, his pupil, had a social outlook, an excessive energy, suggested in his early theatre days by a very thick crop of hair that seemed to vibrate with electricity. He had a yearning for participation in the liberation of the common folk according to bolshevist policy but an uncertainty as to the best medium to employ. His earlier work was in the theatre where he disclosed an original outlook and gift of invention. Later he turned to the kinema,



HENRIETTE PASCAR

The beautiful and highly accomplished Roumanian who founded, organised and directed the First Children's State theatre in Moscow. She sought to express an ideal of beauty, such as she believed the child mind to possess, through plays, some of which she wrote or adapted herself.

which offered the best means of expressing the fashionable mass personality and the greatest anarchy of form. Pletnev was a typical working-man of the self-educated class. He was a poet, essayist, and playwright, an organiser and director of the Proletcult theatre of exceptional merit. He retained the outlook of the working-man, and was in the best sense a representative of the toilers suddenly lifted by fearful events from a comparatively dying condition into the light of a new life. He shared their longing for complete liberation and for redemption. He was a fighting captain whose task was not to establish the new society in a workers' paradise, but to help it to remove some of the gloom and repression of the old regime that still impeded its footsteps, so that it could prepare itself to take the difficult path before them. Foregger was an inventor of genius who took the mechanical age into the theatre and sought to interpret some of its wonders by means of satirical dances. Actually he was one of the new romantics of the Machine, engaged in mastering its psychology, physiology and mechanics. He was like a knight of old rescuing man from a demon which he has created and restoring to him the attributes which he has given to the demon. Foregger reinvented dances based on a strictly scientific study of the anatomy of the machine. These machine dances were the fashionable American ones, such as the Fox Trot, grimaces of the body and legs, related to their proper origin, that is, dances translated in terms of the machine, and announcing Man's liberation from the inferno of the Machine. It is hardly necessary to say that Foregger's concept of the Machine was opposite to that of Karel Capek's. The first regarded it as a mechanical aid to liberation, the second as a mechanical peril. To Capek its present-day development suggests that the man of the future will be entirely dependent upon mechanical organisation, contrivances, etc. He will, in fact, become a machine. To the new Russia the Machine is a slave, not a master. In exploding mid-Victorian concepts and fears

Foregger has done an exceptional service to man through the theatre.

(2) THE PROLET CULT THEATRE

The most important of the smaller theatrical organisations is the Proletcult theatre. The term proletcult is an abbreviation of proletarian culture. It was originally given to a working-class cultural movement that sprang up in 1905 with the aim of promoting and spreading a form of culture among the workers that belonged to themselves. It was an assertion of their own spirit. After the Revolution a proletcult organisation arose which aimed to confer on the proletarians cultural rights and privileges of their own which in the old days they had been denied. It was in intention an industrial workers' organisation, for industrial workers who were willing to remain true to themselves and to the principles of the Revolution, to uphold the banner of collectivism and materialism, and to work for the immediate and complete social change. But the exclusive character of the organisation did not prevent a gradual alliance with the Left Wing of the intellectuals, that is, the old intellectuals who accepted the new regime. They changed the symbolic, mystic and individualistic content of their verse and writings, for realistic pictures of the factory, the village, electrification, the unity of the working-class, the transference of power to the common people, the passing of competition and exploitation and the coming of a new society organised on bolshevist principles. Still in spite of this alliance with converted members of the old school of individualists, a preference was shown for worker playwrights, producers, scene designers, actors, painters, sculptors and poets.

Though there is no doubt that a number of radical tendencies produced by the Revolution have come together in a wide movement, a movement which aims to clothe a new society in a new style made from a recipe provided by the experiences, the psychology, the physical make-up, the customs, habits, dress,

by the general characteristics of that society, there is some doubt whether the result has been as successful and widespread as expected. The fact is there was and still is a rather hard obstacle to overcome before the proletcult movement can become a world, or even a national one. The greatest doubt has existed throughout as to whether there can be a proletcult, and whether there is a proletarian. What is a proletarian? Where socially and industrially does he begin and end? What is a worker? Where does he emerge from the lower orders, the casuals and the costers, and where does he stop at the lower middle class, the small shopkeepers, etc? Is a proletarian a toiler in the sense of a human being working for a wage and refusing to put money in another man's pocket? Is he merely a manual labourer incapable of work vibrating with vital purpose and beauty? Is there a proletarian form of art, of music, a proletarian technique, a proletarian literature? Is art expression fundamentally individualistic, or can art expression be proletarian, the expression of mass experiences by a mass-man? These questions are increasingly claiming attention, and till satisfactory answers are forthcoming the movement to which they relate must stand still. Trotski was in doubt as to the existence in Russia of a real proletarian culture. Lunacharski once admitted that a proletarian ideology had not appeared in New Russia. International symposia on the subject of proletarian literature have revealed the fact that there is not only much confusion, even in radical ranks, concerning the meaning and significance of the word proletarian, but a wide divergence of opinion on the source of the creative power which we call art, whether it is found in strict æsthetes who hold the belief that individualistic artists are the true rulers of mankind, or whether it is found in men who are engaged in industrial production, who participate closely in political and social events, and who need only opportunity and encouragement to liberate and give it form.

It is noteworthy that those who believe that a proletarian

form of literature is springing up in Europe and America invariably go to intellectual sources for evidence. They confuse proletarian expression in literature with expression by proletarians. The experiences of the small towners and toilers of America, as related by Dreiser and Anderson Sherwood, are really observations by writers with a sociological outlook and radical sympathies. They are not actual experiences determined by human needs set up by materialistic forces and circumstances operating upon the writers.

The question raised by the Revolution of the real identity of the proletarian in pursuit of his own form of art, drama, poetry, literature, and other externalised characteristics of his own mind and emotions, his thought and action, was very complicated because of the absence of a model of a proletarian shaped by a volcanic revolution. This revolution had torn men and their thoughts into fragments which were to be pieced together by new experiences born of the many and varied currents of events. The pre-war proletarian was merely a skeleton barely tolerated by the imperialistic government, a somewhat hopeless skeleton waiting to be covered with flesh and nerves and muscles, and to be set in motion by the rushing torrent of an unparalleled event that might never take place. No one could say with certainty what this new man who was to sway men all over the world would be like.

There was a definite model of a bourgeois individual because time, material and other forces and circumstances had fixed the type, and statues, pictures, books, and many objects had externalised it. Time had indeed perfected and fixed a bourgeois type, had forged powerful tools of expression, and determined characteristics by which all men knew it. Moreover, it had provided it with a technique of its own so efficient and powerful that it could not only check the advance but destroy a new type without a technique, such as the proletarian was when the Revolution began.

Culturally, the proletarians were, in 1917, if not undefined,

at least, unarmed. This fact was noticed by their leaders, who took immediate steps to remove it. Bulletins were published to express and propagate a conception of proletarian cultural ideas. Lunacharski went the proletarian rounds with his proletarian æsthetic; P. Kergentsev engaged in a furious reaction to proletarianism with books, essays and lectures on the reconstruction of the theatre on a mass and proletarian basis. Many significant and dynamic figures appeared in the arena to take part in the work of clothing the pre-war skeleton with flesh.

The proletcult theatre that came with the Revolution likewise had no model to base itself upon. It is true that powerful forces had been at work prior to the Revolution, providing material for the New theatre that has arisen since 1917, but they did not establish a permanent Left Wing erection, only gave birth to mushroom-like theatrical growths designed to make a fierce denunciation of their day, and its horrors, and to give warning of the great change-over that must take place if those in power did not mend their ways.

So this proletcult branch of the New theatre had no plays, no established technique, no organisation. Everything was in the air. In its early days it was so destitute of working material that it actually used the scenic cumber of the old bourgeois theatre as a background for new revolutionary improvised plays. It began by using futurist scenery which Lunacharski had said was the proper frame for a revolutionary content. This sample of a big and variegated legion of old-fashioned methods of expression, had quite a long run in the Centre and Right sections of the new theatre till at last its identity with reaction was disclosed and it was dismissed.

The cause of this kind of confusion was that the bourgeoisie had a fixed model of a theatre which expressed bourgeois ideology and employed bourgeois technique. The model was established in every country as a model of what a bourgeois theatre was and should be. Needless to say this model had taken possession of and confused the Russian rebels' minds.

With this model before them the Government-appointed and self-anointed proletarians found themselves faced with the big task of building a theatre in the likeness of themselves. The theatre must be the first model of the theatre that should go triumphantly across Europe and America bent upon proletarianising mankind. The desirability of such a theatre does not enter into the explanation of its birth and extension as given here. The point is that the international intention has not succeeded, while the national one, the intention of giving the New theatre a decidedly proletarian bent must remain in doubt till it is definitely settled what a proletarian is. We know what the industrial and common folk are, and the most we can say of the New theatre as it stands to-day is that it stands for both and has a socialistic unity. And we may say that within the past eleven years a new style has emerged in Russia which is called a proletarian style.

The history of the Left Wing theatre known as the Proletcult theatre is as follows. In 1917-18 it was much in the air and formed an essential part of a working-class movement towards self-culture and self-expression. It stood for the new spirit of collectivism seeking to dominate and suppress the old spirit of individualism, that is, it suggested that a new theatre was wanted which must be a builder of the new social life. Hence it demanded a radical content containing the following ingredients. The fight for social liberation, the disappearance of individualism and the appearance of collectivism and the problems dictated by collective necessities, information of a new-born society, of a period of romantic heroism and industrial aspiration, of one-class activities, of a mass personality. It demanded plays and poetry that should no longer advertise the author alone, but should express a mass-personality, a human collectivism. On the stage the personality of the Mass must predominate. Individualised figures when introduced must express the outstanding figures of the struggle. The Mass must form a Greek chorus resembling the ancient Greek chorus to

express misery and triumph, social and political. In short dramatic themes expressing the facts of revolutionary and everyday human life, and throwing light on a practical sociology, was the material marked out for theatrical treatment.

The proletcult theatre, like all the theatres that eventually came to compose the united New theatre, had definite stages of development. There were three main stages. 1. The stormy period of revolutionary social life, with its wealth of ideas. 2. The calmer period of transition with its sufferings and the sacrifices made by the toilers in order to secure the first results of the revolution. 3. The period of comparatively peaceful labour and more favourable conditions for creative expression, one offering wider scope for the demonstration of the ability of the worker-writer to write plays illustrating the ideas, sentiments and moods, and describing the new problems of morality and social and industrial life. The immense dramatic forces at work during these three periods brought to light some talented playwrights from among the toilers themselves. There were five subdivisions or sociological phases showing the escape of the proletarians from the old tyranny to a greater freedom of expression.

1. The period of preparation for establishing a Proletcult theatre. In 1918 the organisation of the central and district Proletcult theatres was commenced. The district theatres sprang out of newly-established or reorganised dramatic circles. Dramatic companies were composed of the representatives of light and heavy industries. This exposed the fact that the circles were composed of clerical staffs, not of manual workers. As a result the latter were included. At this time dramatic productions were illustrations of the Revolution and as such designed to be played at the Front when Mamontov was making his advance. Such productions were intended to fortify the spirit of the Red Army, and it is on record that to Trotski some of the fortifying stuff that reached the Front was equal to army corps because it strengthened the resistance of his soldiers.

In the winter of 1919-20 a cycle of revolutionary plays was produced and set in circulation. It was a cycle of the People's Revolutionary Movements in Russia. It included the following historical movements: 1. The Bolotnikov Movement; 2. The Razin Movement; 3. The Pugatchev Movement; 4. The Decembrist Movement; 5. The Peasant Movement after the Manifesto of 1861; 6. The Movement of January 22nd; 7. The December Movement in Moscow. The dialogue of these episodes was improvised by the actors after the producer had read over each historical episode to them. Another of this series of dramatic improvisations was called "The Red Year." It was in eight pictures: January 22nd, 1905; A Student's Family in Moscow; A Munity in the Military Prison; The Arsenal; The Police Watch; and three others of which I have lost the titles. Evidence of the thoroughness with which such plays were circulated is provided by "The Red Truth" by Vermicheev, who also wrote "The Festival of The Devil." It passed all through Russia. The author was subsequently hanged by Mamontov.

1920-21 saw the two next periods of development. 2. The second was the period of military and revolutionary plays. It was the time of the civil war. The provincial theatrical studios were involved and worker-actors stepped straight from the stage to the trenches to fight and agitate and back to the stage to theatricalise their trench experiences. 3. Next came the period of relief. The civil war was over, the great moment of danger had passed, the bulk of the bourgeoisie had taken flight, the toilers were giving themselves up to hope, to new duties, to the general problems of economic reconstruction and common culture, writers and artists of their own class were beginning to emerge to describe perhaps crudely the experiences they had gone through, the effects of the transforming fires of the revolution, the new road they were about to take, and the dangers which lurked at the gates, and which might, they thought, now be overcome by laughter. Satire was their new fighting weapon.

Accordingly with the passing of the feeling of almost intolerable strain, their plays and performances exhibited the spirit of laughter bound up with sport and athletics. There was a start at acrobatic and athletic acting. The circus technique and apparatus offered themselves as media of expression to be borrowed by the Proletcult theatre.

The Proletcult theatre was by now fully established in a house of its own. The Studio in which it first came to earth was transferred to the Workers' State Proletcult, an organisation associated with the Ministry for Education. At the same time the theatre bred new studios of its own all over the country which enabled it to put its plays into wide circulation. An idea of its early activities may be gathered from the following particulars of its productions. In the new Proletcult theatre were produced "The Mexican," a version of Jack London's story of a young son of toil who won money in a boxing match which enabled him to start a revolution; "Lena," a story of the strike at the big works on the Lena, by V. Pletnev; "Fleto," an episode from the French Commune; "The Dawn of Proletcult," a piece drawn from the verse by different proletarian poets; "Over the Top," a social comedy by V. Pletnev; "Master," by Gofman; "The Red Star," a utopian play by Bagdanaf. The titles alone of plays performed in the provincial studios, "The Tower," "Ekaterinburg," "Igevsky Works," "The Dream of The First of May," "The Enchanted Blacksmith," "The Awakening," "Impossible," "The Avenger," "God Asleep," "Strikes," and "The Shark," show that these writers were moved by the Revolution and Civil war and were anxious to illustrate the emotions and feelings and action awakened by cataclysmic events.

1922-3. The fourth and fifth periods were periods of reaction and protest against European interference with the internal affairs of the new Russia. Plays contained satirical denunciation of foreign political leaders, in particular English and French, and laughter at the blunders, the folly and vanity

of some of the bolshevist leaders, and the absurdities of the bureaucracy. 4. A period of full relief. The proletarians took to letting off steam by means of satire and parody. Laughter was directed at the vanities, follies and weaknesses of the old and new social orders, as well as at foreign diplomatic absurdities. 5. Commencement of the period of construction. Attention became concentrated on themes expressing the mechanical conditions of human life, on the sociological problems of the machine as the builder of the new economic Russia and its industrial population. Expression was activistic resembling that found in the factory, workshops and the circus.

It will be gathered from the foregoing that the Proletcult studio and the theatre that grew out of it were organised for the use and enlightenment of volunteer toilers. Such volunteers were drawn from workshops and factories and from the many and varied Trades Union organisations. They gave their spare time to the work required of them. They studied and played sometimes till the early hours of the morning and neither received nor expected pay. Any money required for the upkeep of the theatre was provided by a fund to which all departments of the proletcult subscribed. There was no huge rent to pay, such as cripples advanced theatrical activities in Western Europe and America. By the nationalisation of property many large and small buildings were made available for free theatrical activities. One frequently came across working-class theatrical organisations established in the palaces and mansions of the old rich. The Moscow Proletcult theatre had its headquarters at the Villa Morossov, a gorgeous imitation Spanish palace built and formerly occupied by Morossov a pre-war Russian multi-millionaire. Its capacious and luxurious ballroom was converted by the new occupiers into a theatre interior, the description of which belongs to the general description of the development of Proletcult form.

Along with the development of content went a development of form. In studying this development one becomes aware

of a source of the aforesaid confusion concerning the meaning and identity of a proletarian. The early supporters of the Proletcult theatre included the theorists, Meierhold, Lunacharski, Kergentsev, Tichonovisch, Smyschlaiev, Tichonovisch, Gan and Arvatov. The playwrights Lunacharski, Kergentsev, Pletnev, Maiakovski, Reisner, Vermischev, and Kamienski. The producers, Smyschlaiev, Tichonovisch, Eisenstein, Meierhold, Foregger, Prosvietov, and Radlov. The "decorators" Konchalovski, Altmann, Chagal, Shtevchenko, Lentulov, Shterenberg, Kandinski, Rodchenko, Pevchner, Jakulov and Fedorovski. And sculptors like Konenkov, Riedel, Lavinsky and Chaikov, all of whom contributed valuable ideas. This list suggests that there has been a close co-operation between the working-class and the intellectual leaders and though the former have discovered significant talents and gifts of their own, they have doubtless derived much from their intellectual associates. Thus the identity of the true proletarian is made harder. In Russia the proletarian may be a toiler some of whose mental characteristics have been determined by his association with radical intellectuals, or a toiler who has acquired a plastic mentality. Biologically speaking he resembles a "sport."

If this is so, then the first edition of the post-revolution proletarian cannot be like the latest edition, especially if the latter has developed on the principle of denying the past and meeting the demands only of to-day. He is fluid and faithfully follows the changes in the life of the labouring class while assimilating some at least of the interpretative methods of the proletarianised intellectuals.

The kind of transformation he is likely to undergo is indicated by the stages of the change and development of technique in the Proletcult theatre. At first old futurist stock scenery and a flat stage were used. The untrained worker-actors let themselves go in a more or less conventional restrained way in performing plays that illustrated the Revolution or revolutionary

ideas. In the second stage constructions of an industrial kind—scaffolding, platforms, stairs designed for rapid movement, were used. The worker-actor found no difficulty in using them because labour had made him physically plastic. Indeed he spoke with his limbs in terms of the machine. He could tell an audience more by his use of a skeleton structure than by the most eloquent speech. With the third stage he came still further out of his toiler shell and experimented with the circus arena and its apparatus, as invented by Eisenstein (now a film producer) to fit the Proletcult theatre. This invention consisted of a circular arena with steeply-slanting seats on three sides for the audience, a stage with curtains on the fourth side (if a circle may be said to have sides) for the entrance of the actors. The open arena was fitted with the usual circus apparatus used by circus performers. All this was a distinct advance in Proletcult stagecraft. It suggested that the worker-actors were undergoing a strict training as interpretative acrobats, and were capable of saying all that was necessary by movements as sternly disciplined as, say, those of a trapeze performer. Another significant thing was that this method of interpretation was a further illustration of the young toilers grappling with the sociological problem of man's mastery of the Machine by rescuing those very movements which man himself has put into the machine, and using them in the service of the community. Here was another example of the method so welcomed in the New theatre of embodying and reflecting the social change in terms of the disciplined human body.

The introduction of Machine ideas probably originated with Eisenstein. He was concerned not only with using the untrained common people as actors but in placing them as far as possible in their actual surroundings. He produced one play in a large scale factory at Moscow. The factory hands interpreted the theme of the play amid masses of machinery. Their interpretative movements were those which the machinery had fostered. He has since transferred this method to the film.

This third stage of technical development accompanied the use of an improvised form of drama, a form that most appealed to the toiler. It ignored the set rules of playwriting and demanded that the play from the commencement must shape itself or be shaped as it moves along. Meierhold held that the play must shape itself. As we have seen it called forth a new type of arena stage and its machinery to give effect to dramatic satire by which the toiler could translate his present-day experiences. It necessitated a system of acting that released possibilities of actorship and citizenship lying dormant in him and made a citizen of him, and contributed to that love of sport which has come to be regarded by people of sense as the re-affirmation of human life. Good sport whether on the stage or in the field is the language of exaltation. On the whole it would seem that the Proletcult theatre was rapidly becoming a medium of exaltation.

A very good example of the work of the theatre as a playground of spontaneous co-operation designed to give widest scope for the application of the principles of simplicity, spontaneity, improvisation, concentration and co-operation appeared in the production of a satire built on the framework of Ostrovski's play, "Enough Stupidity in Every Wise Man." The collaborators removed the content and replaced it by a very witty parody made by themselves. In its new dress it was a gay attack on the White Army, emigres, foreign diplomats—a satire made to purge the new world as they conceived it of undesirable elements.

LEFT GROUP (*continued*)

B. SMALL ORGANISATIONS

(1) THE LITTLE MASS THEATRE

In 1905-6 during the widespread struggle between the Tsarist Government and the common folk, industrial workers, peasants and intellectual radicals, a very large number of little revolutionary theatrical organisations appeared. When the revolution was crushed down these organisations were sup-

pressed. Many of them continued to exist underground to reappear at the surface with the bolshevist revolution in 1917. The Revolution had the effect of greatly increasing the number of trades unionists. There were in 1905, 200,000; since the Revolution the number has increased to 11,000,000. Thus the Revolution was responsible for a very large increase in the number of those who were willing and no doubt anxious, to collaborate in theatrical work and to form audiences. Hence it was not surprising to find in 1917-18 all over Russia little groups of men, women and children making little theatres of their own. These smaller organisations arose from the initiative of the common folk themselves. They had nothing to do with the big organisations which have already been described. They did not come under the Government decrees. They were free to do as they liked so long as they avoided reactionary entertainments. They were innumerable. They used factories, clubs, rooms, cellars, barns, any hole and corner places that were available, as theatres. Many of the groups were composed of families and their friends. Later, changes of organisation took place. These will be described elsewhere.

During the early Revolution and Civil war years there was a very great outburst among the common-folk of enthusiasm for theatrical representation. They held the New theatre to be a medium of self-realisation and self-expression. They set to work to organise a branch of their own representing a little Mass theatre. It was a new tool with which they could destroy the undesirable features of the old Russia, and build a new Russia much after their own likeness. Thus it implied sociological intentions similar to those of the Proletcult theatre. Its organisation was a collectivist one. Its content was human life reshaped by the Marxian-Leninist materialism. Its religion or faith was bolshevism. Its philosophy was materialism. It was a positivist church with officials for priests. It had no æsthetic, no literature, was in fact anti-æsthetic and anti-literary. Its sciences were natural, mechanical and social. The basis of its creative and

constructive activities was a passion for the Machine. Its politics rested on the assumption of power. Its economics struck the new note of energy economics. Its social outlook was a reaction to the claims of the one-class society. As to continuity it repudiated it. The little collectivist or Mass theatrical organisation refused to see anything agreeable in the past, anything capable of contributing to the constructive demands of its day. By doing so it threw the Centre and Right overboard so far as continuity was concerned. Many examples of plays produced by this spontaneous organisation—plays reflecting the somewhat primitive mind of the common folk at this stage of release, could be given. Very few points in the struggle for a new kind of existence were left untouched. The plays were a crude, but instructive and original interpretation of the awakening of a very large body of common folk to new duties and responsibilities. They gave an excellent idea of what a primitive subject people is disposed to do the moment it is set free to play at liberation in the theatre. Here was an analysis of the cause of enslavement in the past, of the attainment of liberation in the present, of intentions regarding the future. One improvised play, "The Mangy Dog" which I saw performed in a dark and stuffy cellar, made a strong protest against the class that breeds war. The methods of this class were exhibited and severely criticised. According to the play there are Flesh Kings who supply the military authorities with "cannon fodder" at a stated price per thousand. The way they do so was roughly illustrated. Military officers appeared wearing death's heads and ordered a consignment of "fodder." Whereupon the Flesh Kings sent their servants among the audience to select lusty young men and women. These were put in scales on the stage, weighed and allotted to groups according to their physical condition and capacity. The whole thing was a mixture of class-war and anti-war sentiment. Another improvised and very effective play which I saw performed in a small room and by all present, was a strange mixture of religious symbolism, anti-capitalism,

and a presentation of the problem which two recent revolutions, Russian and Italian, were designed to solve. I refer to the great problem of food. One saw a body of starving working-class folk praying to God to remove the barrier between their sufferings and complete relief. This barrier was Capitalism. It was symbolised by a grey wall behind which concealed from the audience-players were the causes of the evil conditions of present-day civilisation. In the end, the wall and all that it concealed were swept away and the symbols of a bolshevist victory took their place.

The clubs served slightly different purposes according to their different political faiths. They were Trades Union clubs actuated by different political and socialist motives. In the majority performances were open free to members of the club, their families and friends, as well as to members of other clubs. Anyone who liked could join in the performance. Others, the extremist clubs, were exclusive and admitted strangers only by ticket obtained at their trades unions. The Trades Union clubs arranged their own programmes. Everything was done on a co-operative basis. No one was paid. The co-operators were men and women in regular employment. They improvised plays, acted them and made the costumes, scenery and accessories. In those early days a very large number of children used to attend the performances and were allowed to do exactly as they liked much to the annoyance of foreign visitors who were not used to their capers. In later days there has been a large increase of clubs and a very large increase of members together with improvement in the little Mass theatrical activity.

Club plays presented crudities similar to those above mentioned. They also indicated the club members' mentality and attitude towards the vital problems and conditions of political, industrial and social life in the past and present.

At Festival time, say, May 1st, there was an air of festivity about everything. Rooms and halls were hung and festooned with banners, inscriptions and evergreens. Some entertainments

took the form of a revue, or a frame for an improvised story illustrating the meaning of the Revolution and drawing a moral from it. For example, there was "Once In An Evening." It was the rather hackneyed theme of a man who wants to start a revolution and has an obstacle to overcome. The obstacle is the Governor of a prison who knows all about the revolution plot and has the instigator of it under his care. He is willing to release the man if a woman, his comrade, will give herself to him. The woman agrees "La Tosca"-like, not knowing that the revolution has already begun. In the end the prison is set on fire, the general burnt to death and everything comes right according to bolshevist plan. This was performed at the Railwaymen's club. "The Passer-by" was another typical festival play. The theme was the old type peasant girl in love with a degenerate sample of the old aristocracy. A passer-by tells her of the glories of a recently-discovered Canaan where there are no masters, servants, wage problems or corrupt politicians. It is the Workers' Paradise where the toiler is a true son of toil inasmuch as he does not employ the labourer, and does not receive an income from someone else's labour; he is free and he enjoys the fruit of his own labour. The girl wants to go there, but the man she loves does not. He prefers the home of his rich mother. To solve the problem he dies suddenly. The First of May motive was ingeniously introduced by the converted peasant girl who is made to meet toilers going to work and to remind them that the First is a day on which no man works but all must observe it as The Day. So they lay down their tools and all rejoice. This was a Central Trades Union club play.

Out of the welter of the revolution came a kind of Trades Union club that was peculiar to the revolutionary period. I mean the Trades Union memorial club. For example there was one that was established to commemorate a bolshevist named Gorohov who was killed while fighting at the Front. At one memorial club I saw an entertainment which appeared to be a

family affair designed to emphasise *The Day*, and to honour the bolshevist revolution. The whole thing had an air of primitive religion or faith in bolshevism. There was the usual ritual and symbols, portraits of Lenin, Trotski and Marx, red drapery and large bannerets breathing defiance, inviting brotherhood and unity.

The entertainment which took the form of an improvised revue deserves to be described in detail because it was an extremely good example of political revolution in terms of crude or folk symbolism. The stage contained a large clock, which faced the audience. Its hands pointed to midnight, and it bore the words, "All on the streets."

The curtain rose at five minutes to twelve on a group of the old order, soldiers, priests, etc. These scampered off as the clock struck twelve. A peasant descended in a basket from an aeroplane with a lot of presents, including a piece of red, which symbolised the Revolution. He asked all present to celebrate *The Day*. They did so by standing up in memory of the fallen fighters in the Revolution. Next there entered a character with a big bottle full of tears supposed to have been shed by Big Business and the Bourgeoisie who have lost their trade and property. Then a quantity of paper was unfolded, revealing a little ball. This represented the big promises and the infinitesimal fulfilment by the Entente. Following this came a large golosh with the Entente and social democrats seated in it after the fashion of the family that lived in a shoe. It meant that the Entente and socialists were in a scrape while the bolshevists were out of it. And then came portentous volumes and miles of red-tape to suggest that bureaucracy required endless means to attain a small object. The symbolism continued its work in this fashion. Then came demonstrations and processions of working men and peasants' children, augmented by those in the audience. There were speeches by soldiers and sailors and workers and by representatives of England, Germany, America, and Italy. There were shots and a crash,

individualistic inscriptions were torn down, revealing collectivist ones. There were transformation effects, including the uniting of workers of the world. Finally came the singing of the "International" in which all joined. A few hours later I saw a theatricalised representation on a vast scale. It was the parade of troops and the workmen's demonstration in the Red Square.

From time to time I saw many of these little club theatres at work. I found them all alike, instructive, and demanding energy and endurance on the part of the spectator. I remember going to the Soldiers' Club theatre in the Red Square. The performance began soon after seven o'clock. Three plays adapted from stories by Gorki were given after which, at three o'clock in the morning, came a dance. The theatre had a scenic studio, where all the scenery was designed by soldiers. Mention may be made here of the Gorki Studio theatre, which originated as one of the specialised clubs, established in 1918. Later it became the Gorki Studio, and later still the Gorki Studio theatre. It was staffed entirely by working men and women possessing elementary education. Its first work was to produce dramatised versions of Gorki's stories, "The Passions Enchained," "Malva," etc. The sociological value of this theatre was the emphasis it placed on a subject of present-day national interest in Russia, the relations between town and country and the reconciliation of peasant and town worker. Further it dealt with Gorki's favourite theme—the life and psychology of the peasant as the life and psychology of Russia.

The Factory theatres were no less active and enterprising. In Leningrad there were twenty-three factory theatres under the direction of the art department of the Gubpolitprosvet. They worked also under the observation of the organising committee of the factory theatres. There were in addition 160 clubs with worker-actor, dramatic, musical, and other circles.

The repertory of the Factory theatre was approved by a Bureau which consisted of an organising committee managing

138 THE NEW SPIRIT IN THE RUSSIAN THEATRE

the art department and representatives of the biggest factory theatres.

The club circles worked not only separately, but sometimes together when districts united for collective representations, especially summer open-air performances. They also went to the villages in summer-time to act before, and with the peasants. Special plays dealing with peasant life were prepared for the purpose. A centre called the Independent theatre was organised for the purpose of uniting the activities of the factory and club theatres, to collect and summarise dramatic material, to elaborate methods and to provide instructors for promoting the general work.

The Independent theatre section of the factory and club theatres had a central workers' studio and group for the producing of agitational plays, which were represented at the club and factory theatres.

Peasant theatrical activities were of considerable sociological importance. In Kostroma alone there were 600 village dramatic circles. In the Nishni-Novgorod district there were about 900. It was said that the peasants were working out a theatre and a dramatic form of their own. They were inclined to religious mysticism, whereas the workers were chiefly concerned with mechanistic thought and action.

(2) OPEN-AIR MASS THEATRE AND PAGEANTRY

The passion for the theatre, so vividly demonstrated by the formation and work of thousands of small theatrical organisations, found a wider outlet for expression in open-air mass plays in which sometimes as many as 100,000 people took part, in the performance of plays at street corners, in demonstrations on a very large scale, festivals, military parades, processions of protest against foreign interference or injustice. To many foreign visitors they recalled popular observances in the past in ancient Rome, The Middle Age, during the Renaissance and in more recent time. The Mass theatre (in the sense of mass representations) had an origin in the Greek theatre, in religious ceremonies



"THE DAY OF THE TURBIN FAMILY"

A revolutionary play at the Moscow Art Academic theatre. The setting is similar to that of a pre-war M. A. T. production of which photographic realism is the chief characteristic.

and festivals forming collective spectacles. It was continued in the Roman Circus, and found later expression in the Middle Age in plays acted in the open. The idea appeared in the writings of theatrical theorists of the beginning of 20th century. It was supported by Viacheslav Ivanov an authority on Greek literature. The idea was taken up by Max Reinhardt in Germany, Firmin Gemier in France and I think by Basil Dean and Sir Martin Harvey in England. Meierhold during his subjective period tried to fuse actor and spectator in one in a mystical union, but was limited by lack of means. But when he entered upon his post-revolution objective period he found all the means he required. They differed from earlier ones in some particulars. They were used fully by the bolshevist Government, some of whose representatives took an active part in organising great political mysteries, in order to extend the policy of leading the people to play at revolution and with the sentiment of liberation, to the greatest number of untrained actors and passers-by—a number that the roofed-in theatres could not possibly accommodate.

The content of these mass interpretations and representations was mainly the expression of the sentiment of liberation, and the system of feelings to which it belonged. In the early mass plays there were representations of the bolshevist victory, demonstrations of the glorification of the new regime, celebrations of anniversaries, passionate protests against attempts by enemies to rob the people of the first fruits of victory. It was in fact a new content conforming to the spirit of the new epoch and suggesting and reflecting with a revolutionary ardour the new problems that were presenting themselves in every sphere of thought and action. Along with this went the exhibition of new tools for solving the problems, as exhibited, for instance in the models of various Trades Union activities. The toilers that took part in the great festivals in bolshevist Russia were thus seen unfolding under the touch of the spirit of a new epoch and experiencing great enchantments and great hopes,

and awakening to industrial and social claims and duties which the light of the Revolution was presenting to them in very attractive colours.

These general theatrical tendencies gave Russia the air of a country in dramatic eruption. Probably there has never been such an overwhelming flow of theatrical expression as that which characterised the popular interpretation of events of the first three years of the Revolution. Human life is in itself dramatic. All around us there is a process of evolution or unfolding, continuously going on. It varies in degree according to personality and circumstance. A strong dynamic human being extends his individuality under the touch of experience from day to day. He rises from level to level. This is the dramatic process. Significant human life is always undergoing this process. When the process is translated in terms of the theatre then human life becomes theatricalised. The introduction of the Mass theatre, the freedom given to the common folk to express their collective life in terms of the theatre, this was the theatricalisation of the common life of the people. The episodes of the collective drama, the life folk were living under the Revolution, were selected and represented in an organised theatrical manner. They were episodes of the sudden and radical change of human society in Russia, that is of human society unfolding under the touch of cataclysm. How thoroughly and intensely the new population was stirred up to think in terms of the theatre was shown in great theatrical congresses, like that held in Moscow in 1919. Representatives of the Workers' and Peasants' theatres met to contend for possession of the whole theatre. The one party wanted it for the expression of their extreme radical tendencies. The peasants wanted to put it to a more conservative use.

Mass representations were like the club play productions, crude but very effective. Generally speaking, they were concerned with the mass production of the sentiment of liberation. They were very impressive because of the subject treated, the

method employed and the very large scale on which they were carried out.

The earliest efforts were the theatricalisation of revolutions, historical and contemporary. Historical cycles were given like those already described. The history of revolution unfolded itself in popular outbursts stirred up by past leaders like Pugatchev, Stenka Razin and others. Some of the representations were given at street corners where passers-by joined in. This "deification" of popular heroes seemed to say that if the common folk and their extremist leaders challenged the past, they still looked to it to provide revolutionist romantic heroes capable of reminding them not only that there had been a great Revolution but there had been many revolutionists.

The representations on a very large scale, in which thousands of untrained actors took part, were not so much challenges of the past as imitations of the battles and victories of the present, that is, battles actually fought and won. This open-air theatricalisation of history, and of current events and activities, was on spontaneous, co-operative and improvised lines. Simply a scenario filled in by the untrained mass acting against a large public building, say, the Winter Palace, or the Stock Exchange, and provided with rudimentary scenery necessary to obtain realistic effects. Demonstrations, which also had a strong theatrical atmosphere, took place in the largest squares available. They were not demonstrations such as Western Europe and America are accustomed to see, not great crowds composed of the working-class aiming to vent their social or industrial or economic indignation, but open-air spectacles on a vast scale in which everybody and everything present took part. Government representatives, the general public, professionals from the theatre and opera, working-men, women and children, all joined to attain a thrilling theatrical effect. Vehicles were stopped and used as platforms by agitators, workers, students, revolutionary poets, and others set on lashing their fellow

creatures into a display of the essential spirit of the moment. Banners, flags and evergreens played their parts.

Next in importance to these vast demonstrations, and deriving ideas from them, came the great May Day celebrations, which took the form of partly a demonstration, partly a procession. The most important was no doubt that held in the Red Square, Moscow. Sociologically it presented the life story of the new materialist Workers' Republic above which floats the Red Flag bearing the emblems, the Star, the Sickle and the Hammer. By means of an imposing military, naval and aerial display the story told of the safeguarding of this new Kingdom; by the procession of trades unions with their working models of the application of the latest science to industry, agriculture and co-operative banking and general activities, together with giant statistic tables, the story told of economic progress. By the procession of happy children in lorries half hidden by evergreens, demonstrating the application of new educational ideas, the story told of the advance made in children's welfare and mental and physical development. Then there was the procession of mummers and their theatrical forms expressing the popular spirit of satire and merriment. Dismal caricatures of European statesmen in cages, vitriolic skits on capitalism and foreign affairs, clowning, singing and dancing—told of the general attitude of mind towards those who were regarded by the Mass as enemies of the new Russia.

A striking feature of these mass representations was the co-operation of studio artists, painters, draughtsmen, designers and sculptors who were ordered on the streets to put their services at the disposal of the common folk. To them fell the task of adding embellishment and beauty. They were responsible for ornamenting the fronts of private and public buildings, festooning the streets, hanging them with banners, and designing and carrying out the civic designs which the occasion demanded.

They also designed the crude stages and scenery used in

the big mass representations. Such representations were called political mysteries. Rightly, they should have been called battle and victory mass spectacles. Actually, they were celebration spectacles representing Marxian-like struggles between masters and slaves. Meierhold planned a vast battle and victory spectacle to be staged in a large field near Leningrad. It was an exceedingly elaborate affair. Among the actors were army corps, a large body of sailors, and working-men and others. Constructions were used specially designed for field work. Tanks and other up-to-date military mechanical tools were also included in the scheme. Meierhold also "staged" "Mystery Bouffe" on a big scale in the open, and "Earth Prancing" was used as an open-air spectacle. Another big remarkable mass representation appeared in "The Liberation of Labour." It was really a large scale version of the theme of the little mass symbolic play described as having been represented in a room. In "The Liberation of Labour" the characters and scenes were highly elaborated, but the story was similar. There was the starving workpeople, the grey wall symbolising the obstacle between their misery and a splendid kingdom of plenty beyond. There was the collapse of the wall, the rising of the sun and the singing of the "International," to bring down the "curtain." Such curtains were common to both large and small theatrical representations. The whole audience usually signified their full belief in the liberation sentiments expressed by the play by rising in a body, answering by voice and hands the questions put to them and trooping out singing the "International."

One of the biggest, most important and impressive of the battle and victory species of mass spectacles was "The Storming of the Winter Palace." It was an amazing example of the theatricalisation of the final episode of a struggle as it was remembered shortly after it took place. It reproduced the note of revolt, the din of battle, the shout of victory, all of which rose sharp and clear. The bolsheviks aspire to power. There comes the great fight. Then the fall and flight of Kerenski and

his provisional Government; and then the arrival of Lenin and the Reds acclaimed by a vast multitude.

Such a mighty event was the quintessence of drama. The first and commanding interest is the struggle between the Principles of Good and Evil, and the triumph of one side in the service of mankind, or in the ruin, as different people may view it. To some the 1917 revolution was the outcome of a plot to ruin the human race; to others it was the reverse. To the latter "Storming of The Winter Palace" is a highly-wrought picture of the expulsion of the Satanic host from a world that is the potential Paradise for human beings redeemed from the forces of evil. These forces are arrayed beneath the banner of Capitalism, usually represented by anti-capitalists as a being of vast corporeal dimensions with great financial resources, powers of human exploitation, and a devilish hate for the working-class which is shown in endless variety of diabolical sentiments and acts. As a scene in the "Storming of The Winter Palace" shows, this titanic being, bred in latter days by the industrial age and strengthened by the succeeding financial age, enters on each campaign accompanied by corruption and bribery and cunning, and leagues himself to lesser human demons who pay him heavily for a short-lived career of dominating power over the political, economic and social world of their epoch. All this means that the story or plot of the theatricalised representation of "Storming of The Winter Palace" is simply the eternal melodramatic one of an hero and his love and an obstacle to be overcome. The Reds are in love with Power (good or bad, according to opinion). They have gained the sympathy of the Mass with the cry of "All Power to the Soviet" and a promise of land distribution and peace. The Whites are in possession of Power of which it is said they are making a mockery. They league themselves with principles which promise to bring them and those they govern to a miserable end. To remove this obstacle the whole of the awakened folk are brought into conflict with the misused Power.

But of course it was the religious side of the appeal by the Reds to the folk for co-operation in separating the ill-assorted pair of lovers, by killing the Evil and handing the maiden, symbolising Russia, over to Economic Good, that took hold of the imagination of the folk. A battle between Demons and Angels, the latter represented by the folk themselves, was sufficient to glut the primitive and combatative side of their nature.

This form of mimic warfare has a considerable sociological interest, as considerable as that of the stage forms of hostile conflict in the Middle Age, the duel between Heaven and Hell.

The performance of this political mystery has been described by two or three German writers. But they are not theatre experts. Holitscher, who has given the best description, is a German artist and publicist, and it may be for this reason, and because the performance took place at night, that he has omitted several important facts. The musical accompaniment by a symphonic orchestra, and the wonderful scheme of lighting, which included searchlights from vessels and from the fortress on the Neva, and other accompaniments and aids, are left out. Still, his description of the action and reproduction of the atmosphere, of this theatricalised battle are so good that a literal translation of what he said about eight years ago may be given here.

It seems that he witnessed the performance from a window of the former State Archives Department, which commanded a full view of the proceedings. He, too, gives it the title of a political mystery, because the combatants recalled the angels and demons of the Middle Age mysteries.

He observed that two large stages, White and Red (it should be two main stages and a number of platforms), had been erected in front of the Winter Palace, the immense semi-circle of which formed first the background, and then the stage of the spectacle as the action was transferred from the exterior to the interior of the Palace. The White Stage was to the right; the Red one to the left, thus symbolising, intentionally or otherwise, the two

political armies of the moment. The stages were connected in the centre by a high arched bridge. At the sound of a gun 1,500 people commenced the action. They included some professional actors, pupils of the dramatic workshops, members of the proletcult clubs, of the theatre societies, of the Red Army and the Baltic Fleet. But at the conclusion more than 100,000 people were participating, pouring out from the tribunes and from the houses. The spectacle began at ten at night. A searchlight attached to the top of the Alexander Column lit up as bright as day the White stage to the right, on which the Provisional Government headed by Kerenski was holding a court attended by generals, ministers, big financiers, etc. From the other side, from the invisible Red stage, an indistinct murmur was heard; it was the low murmur of the multitude who had had enough of the war, but who had to submit to Kerenski's word of command, as the ministerial council under the presidency of the Tribune had just resolved to pursue the war to a victorious termination. The searchlight was turned on to the Red stage. There one saw workmen and women, children and cripples reeling home tired from the factories; maimed soldiers toiling up to the bridge because the order had been issued that new armies were to be formed. At the same time on the White stage capitalists pushed sacks of money with their bellies towards Kerenski's throne, and ministers jumped from the ministerial bench and collected all the valuables in a heap, whilst from the dark side the cry of "Lenin" rose above the murmurs, at first indistinctly, then louder and louder. Next Kerenski was seen on his throne at the head of the ministerial bench gesticulating, waving his hands energetically and pointing to the money-bags. But the ministers remained undecided. They fidgetted about on their bench as from the invisible Red stage the tumultuous sounds became more rhythmic and more collective; one could now hear the music and singing of the "International" coming nearer and nearer. Kerenski was still speaking and gesticulating to the ministerial bench, but the restlessness and indecision

had become general. The whole row, clad in grey, were seen to bend over together to the right, then with a sudden jerk to the left. This was repeated several times with increasingly violent movements. Then came Kerenski's celebrated women's battalions. They mounted the stage with parodied movements, waved their rifles, and shouted to Kerenski, "Mirituræ te saluant." The White stage grew dark, the Red one became illuminated. Workmen, women and children, soldiers with arms, and people of all kinds were seen crowding round a gigantic Red Flag. The factories, the prisons—large red scenic constructions with barred windows, their interiors aglow with glaring red light—opened their doors wide. Crowds increasingly emerged from them, and clustered round the Red Flag. From the collective surging crowd the "International" rose as a powerful articulate chorus. The word "Lenin" was hurled to the sky as by one mighty shout from a hundred thousand throats. In the meanwhile the battalions had drawn up in order round the flag, ready to march across the bridge which connected the two stages. The searchlight was thrown on the White stage. The ministerial bench was seen rocking as if shaken by a storm. A volley came from the Red side. Kerenski's bodyguard rushed with waving rifles to the bridge. The ministerial bench fell with a crash. From a side street of Urizky Square two motor cars rushed up to the White stage, sounding their horns furiously. With a desperate leap, Kerenski sprang from his throne over the fallen ministerial bench to the steps which led from the stage to the ground, where the motor cars received him and his ministers. They rushed madly across the square past the column to the Winter Palace, the gates of which opened with the rapidity of lightning and admitted them.

The Winter Palace now came into the action. All the first storey windows were suddenly illuminated by a most brilliant light. At the same time fighting on the bridge continued. Accompanied by the rattle of machine guns and wild firing, an

action developed, and hand to hand fighting took place between the Red Army and the Whites who had remained behind. Dead and wounded fell down the steps, falling over the parapet of the bridge on to the pavement of the square below. Meanwhile the lights in the Winter Palace were turned on, turned off, and again turned on. For several minutes the battle raged on the bridge, till at last a decision was reached. The whole fighting mass of the Red Army, united and conscious of its strength, this mass singing the "International," pressed down the steps towards the Winter Palace. Regiments emerged from side streets of the Uritzky Square, and thousands of soldiers joined those coming from the stage.

Now from the direction of the Neva the sound of guns was suddenly heard. It came from the "Aurora," the historic battleship that bombarded the Winter Palace in November, 1917, which was firing its guns from the old position, where it lay anchored in the Neva, having been ordered to participate in this political mystery play of the Revolution.

Again the Winter Palace came into the action. A gate opened and cars rushed through with Kerenski and his adherents. They made for the Millionaia, and so away.

A hundred thousand were now approaching the Winter Palace. The immense square was crowded with marching, running, singing, shouting people, all pressing towards the objective. Rifle shots, the rattle of machine guns, the terrible thunder from the "Aurora"—all this was awful, arresting, almost indescribable. Then came rockets to announce the end. The guns of the "Aurora" became silent, the shouting died down, and the Mass melted in the night.

Anyone who witnesses an heroic spectacle of this kind—exhibiting as its salient features a Government being overthrown, the mingled shouts of men slaying and being slain, a great divided crowd returning through mimic warfare to the savage state, yet striking for liberation as each side conceives it—cannot fail to be impressed no matter what his politics may be.

Probably he would be most impressed by its magnitude and the almost ecstatic spirit of the fighting multitude. Of course, different minds would give this mimic battle different interpretations. For instance, the political minded would see in it the habit of counter-revolutionists to avail themselves of the opportunity afforded by a "theatrical bombardment" to foment risings and to carry them out, just as the moralist is apt to see in crime plays and films a means of producing criminals, and a source of instruction in criminal methods. Likewise the sociologist, the historian, the religious mystic, the moralist, the psychologist would each see it in his own way. As for that rarity, the man of the theatre, who possesses a social outlook and a wish to eliminate from the Theatre all dead concepts of purpose and method, who desires to restore to the Theatre that vital function of which misconception and misuse have deprived it, to him it must appear a social representation pregnant with ideas and suggestions of the valuable social work the theatre could undertake if only it were allowed to solve its own problem of a house of interpretation of the epoch.

THE LEFT GROUP

3. SUMMARY OF THE PROLET CULT SECTION

In the foregoing description of the sections of the Left Group theatrical organisations, it is shown how the Group itself formed a creative seed of the Left Wing of the New theatre, which underwent not only a Left fission and fusion, but provided a seed from which later the roots, stem, branches and fruit of the radical Right Wing emerged. The theatricalisation of dramatic human life which spread from the proletcult to countless little theatrical organisations housed in room, cellar, club and factory, thence widened out to street corner plays in which passers-by and vehicles took part, thence to the immense demonstrations, to great processions and parades of the new nationalism—a nationalism that stretched back a thousand

years and drew inspiration from old nationalist patterns, as when Trotsky went beyond the age of Peter the Great in order to dress his soldiers in the glory of the old Russian uniform while dressing the new services—air, tank corps, etc.—in the livery of King Machine—a nationalism proclaimed by a gay procession of children—children dressed in white—and merry Trades Union exhibits borne on emblematic cars, theatrical cars, industrial cars, agricultural cars—a nationalism given to loud laughter caused by the play of satire, the interchange of wit, the merry-andrewism of clowns and buffoons—a nationalism acclaimed by immense crowds caught up by the spirit of street pageantry and revelry. Mammoth parades of the kind showed how a population could, in spite of differences of idea, opinion and character, be drawn together to express a dominating idea—that of liberation—under whose touch they are seen unfolding dramatically.

The theatricalisation thus set moving in widening circles invaded the most unaccustomed places. Theatrical pageantry entered the Russian churches and chapels. On more than one occasion I have entered a large Moscow Church to find it crowded to the door, and a service taking place amidst surroundings of almost unimaginable splendour. I realised that it was a sacred pageant that had contributed much to the mysteries of the street pageantry.

A further manifestation of this new spirit—new because before the Revolution street pageantry was unknown in Russia—was seen in the visits paid by strolling players to the working-class cafés and beer houses, and the air of mediævalism imparted thereby. These players were professionals forced by economic conditions to augment their meagre earnings by going in groups the rounds of the beer restaurants of an evening. They gave brief performances of national and folk songs and dances, and followed each other continuously from one to the other of the hundreds of refreshment places. They possessed considerable talent and doubtless exerted a strong cultural in-

fluence on the common folk. Sociologically, it was a kind of folk-lore education.

LEFT GROUP (*continued*)

4. LITTLE THEATRES OF SATIRE AND EXPERIMENT

During the first period of the New theatre a number of little theatres were established for different purposes, satire, experiment, improvisation. Some have persisted till to-day. Others have disappeared. They derived much from the ideas circulated by the big outdoor mass spectacles and demonstrations. But they did not all belong to one class. Some leaned strongly towards the Left, their satire was accepted by the Left Wing folk as something distinctly its own, and the least sign of compromise on the part of the directors with the reactionaries was strongly resented by their audience. The others leaned as strongly towards the Centre, comprised of a number of little theatres touched by Left compromise. Their attraction for the uncompromising Left folk was not a strong one. A brief description of four of these establishments is sufficient to indicate the nature, value and achievement of this Left Group.

Among the tendencies of the New Russian theatre as rebuilt under the dictatorship of the Revolution and the common folk, was one towards the writing of a new chapter of the philosophic, economic, social and romantic history of the Machine. With the new technique of acting and setting before us we can trace two curves—the falling hold on man; and the ascending mastery by man. In the previous industrial period the curves had been the reverse, showing man as slave and the Machine as master. The new Russian leaders proposed that the machine force should be overcome by knowledge and superior skill. The battle was to be fought by the initiation of the common folk into the mysteries of the Machine. Fighting was in fact to take place as much on the theatrical as the industrial and agricultural Fronts and to be resorted to as recreation and imitation, such as in

games and fights for championships, in tournaments and acrobatics. The Machine was to be put to the service and enlightenment of collective man. Man should become more powerful than the Machine, should direct and control its mass production, and thus prevent it from cluttering up civilised places with the wreckage of human beings, with ugly, soulless and dehumanised things, and from peopling the earth with robots or men made in the likeness of machines. Hence the philosophy of the Machine was changed from a capitalistic or individualistic one to a collectivist one; its economic was rather that of the release of man himself from the machine than the total absorption of man working himself out in terms of steel, set in motion by steam or electricity; its social aim was to serve the people, attune itself to their collective needs, convert itself into their likeness at their best, instead of the reverse; while romantically it was to put on the armour of the essential human requisites of mankind and play a leading part in the struggle for human liberation from the very tyranny of exploitation of which it had been a primary cause.

This romantic attitude is different from that which for over a century has influenced the words and deeds of other would-be deliverers from Machine tyranny and ugliness. Ruskin, Morris and their followers conceived of the Machine rather as a destroying monster to be opposed by æsthetes and social reformers in shining armour. It was the romance of the anti-machinists fighting St. George-like to deliver human beings from a terrible dragon. They argued that the Machine threatened to destroy the romantic spirit in man; whereas the new concept of the Machine promises to invest the Machine with a romantic spirit. The mid-Victorian concept conquered many minds, and so led to a theatricalised war on the Machine as reflected by machine plays of the Karel Capek kind. Such plays argue that the rapidly-developing Machine is cheating man of romance and changing him to a soulless robot.

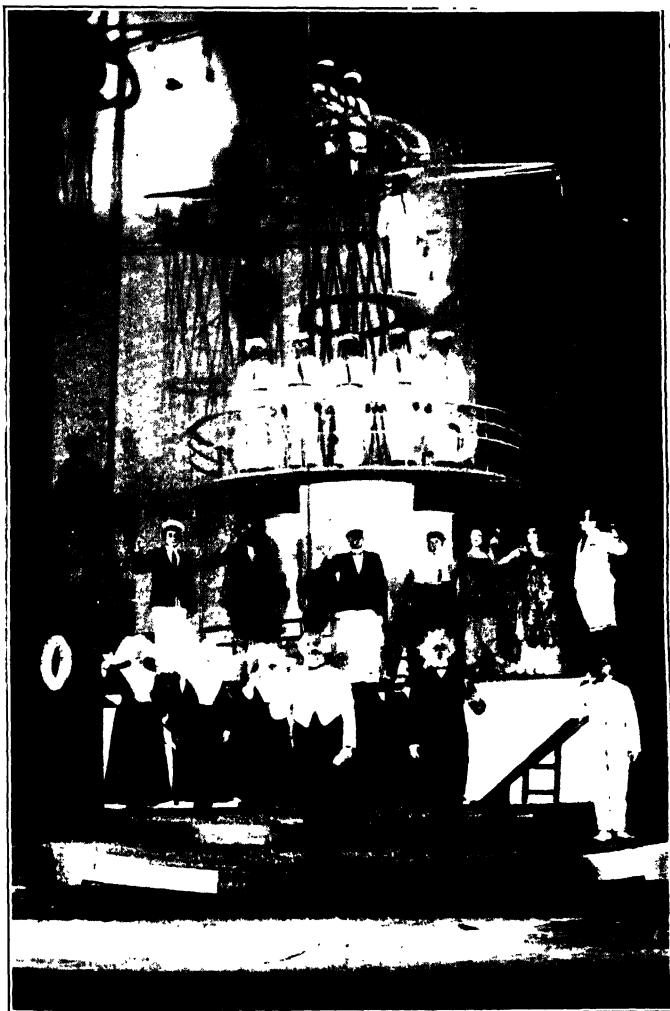
In Russia the new Machine world unfolds in strict sub-

ordination to the constructive needs and welfare of the common folk. Probably the most convincing proof of the taming of the old monster is found not in bio-mechanic acting and construction settings of wood, iron, etc., though they have a strict mechanical basis, but in machine dances by which the dance expression of political and social satire is carried to an astonishing height. It is not hard to believe that old dance forms have received their death blow. It will be recalled that the Diaghelev Russian Ballet has within recent time taken an unaccustomed mechanical path, totally unlike the æsthetic one it took under the influence of Fokin, Nijinski, Bakst and others associated with the Russian Ballet in the old days. It has entered upon mechanical experiment similar to that of the ballets and little theatres of satirical dance in Moscow and Leningrad. Among its latest ballets are purely mechanical ones, composed of a mixture of acrobatics, athletics and machine movements treated as dancing, and an analysis of machinery forming a dynamic background. For example, "Le Pas d'Acier," by Prokoviev and Jakulov, had a setting resembling the analysis of the windmill which formed the setting for Meierhold's version of "The Magnificent Cuck-old."

The basis of the Machine movement in Russia was then the idea that the Machine must become a humane constructor of human life; it must be regarded as an instrument into which man had put the best side of himself, and its new duty and important task was to deliver up man after the manner of the fish that ejected Jonah, and restore to him his creative interpretative and critical movements, while reserving to itself the drudgery of common labour in present-day industrial and commercial terms of mass-production.

N. M. Foregger was the principal exponent of the idea of the scientific delivery of man from the bowels of the cyclopædian monster the Machine. He established a small theatre called the Mastfor (the word being an abbreviation of workshop and

Foregger). He was without money, proper accommodation, costumes and settings. But he had a small enthusiastic group of actors. With these and his own genius for invention, he rapidly made a big reputation for eccentric dances, and satire and parody expressed by dances. The intellectual and emotional qualities were supplied by the Machine, which had begun to yield the secrets of its human features, resemblance and movements of its parts, to Russian professors who were closely engaged studying these things. Their studies revealed the interesting fact that the popular dances of the day, in particular those that were fashionable in America—Fox Trot, Jazz, etc.—were being danced all day and night long by machinery in factories and workshops, and that workmen whose movements were dictated by machinery, danced these fashionable dances not only while handling machinery but every moment of their leisure hours. That is, they repeated, unconsciously perhaps, what the Machine taught them. The discovery of this relation between man and the Machine may not have been new, but the scientific statement of it was. Some of us know that for some time the geometric school of painters and draughtsmen have amused themselves by analysing machines in terms of man. I am not referring to robot making which is a process of making a man in the likeness of a machine. I refer to the process of finding functional resemblances in machine parts to human ones. The Machine is depicted by painters and draughtsmen as an engine of engines just as man is by the biologist. Picabia gave human forms and functions to parts of machinery. The German Muck depicted the machine as a mass of human legs and arms and organs. The Italian Marinetti and his favourite pupil, Depero, treated the machine as God and Devil, and so on. Foregger sought to put the results of scientific investigation into practice to produce laughter. He invented dances repeating the eccentric geometric movements of the machine, while reflecting the follies and vanities of human beings. Thus dancing iron and steel and their motive power, steam and electricity,



" ROAR, CHINA ! "

An anti-Imperialist play at Meierhold's theatre. It is the last of Meierhold's big scale class-war plays. The setting is an example of his continuous search for unity and novelty. It consists of the profile of the British gunboat " Cockchafer," mounted on a revolving stage. The action takes place on this construction, on the forestage and on the strip of water between the two representing a broad river.

became *genii* of laughter that set the common folk laughing at even the most sacred things. They laughed at the absurdities of the bureaucracy, the seemingly strange experiments by Meierhold, by the Moscow Kamerny theatre and the Big theatre, at the extravagant tendencies, national and social, at the follies of the common folk, workmen and peasants, at the indiscretions of the Commissars. Like the Proletcult in its second period, the Mastfor condemned with critical laughter the philosophy, the politics, the funny respectability, the religion, in short, the general conception of social life exhibited by other nations. Thus the forms that Foregger extracted from the Machine were not savagely ingenious ones intended to make people sick, but forms intended to convulse the new society with laughter.

The Little Crooked Jimmy theatre, directed by A. G. Alexseef, was another theatre of satire given up to machine dance parodies of serious plays and criticisms of political and social events. The dances were very popular with the working-class, who doubtless recognised in the mechanical movements of the revised versions of One-Step, Two-Step, Cake Walk, Fox Trot, the syncopated movements of working machines. As I have already suggested, workmen themselves excel in syncopation and machine rhythm. Nicholas Evreinov, the author of "The Theatre of the Soul," a piece played in London, was associated with this theatre. It produced the play with its psycho-physiological centres—the soul, heart and the rest. These played their parts and were represented so as to harmonise with a materialist concept of a more or less mystical concept. This meant that Evreinov, the pre-revolution individualist and dreamer, had gone over to the Left which had no use for subjective speculation, but preferred the objective world.

Two other theatres may be described in order to suggest the variety of methods applied to a single purpose in the New theatre. In the first two, particularly in Foregger's, the idea that the New theatre should be a medium of liberation and exaltation of the common folk was expressed by mechanical

satirical and eccentric dances, that is, dances capable of rousing audiences to great laughter and so liberating them from and exalting them above a realm armoured in hate and struggle.

In the Semperant theatre at Moscow, and the Travelling theatre at Leningrad, it was different. The Semperant, directed by A. V. Bikov, applied improvisation to any dramatic theme. The director gave the idea and the company improvised the dialogue and gestures. During the first period of his work he sought to find a new form. He took his company into the country, where it produced six tales. To the philosophical content of these plays an extraordinary form was given. It was called the new Titanism, a term meaning a new "mystic" heroism. The bigness suggested had something to do with broad effects in line and colour laid on with a swift brush similar to those obtained by Foregger at the Mastfor theatre. It is something begotten by a period in which people read as they run, and have no moments to spare for minute details. In Bikov's opinion it must be mystic in the modern sense in order to avoid exaggerated naturalism. By the new mysticism is meant, I think, mystic realism—a mysticism that affirms life and does not deny it.

The tales produced were called the Tales of Scarabee (perhaps this title has something to do with the Egyptian beetle). In the first one there were representatives of human culture, a capitalist, priest, professor, prostitute, worker, woman painter, woman singer, and a woman worker. Their movements were symbolised by a Machine that eats human beings instead of gold. This means they were parasites preying on each other and society. Together with a part of Moscow, they are torn off the earth, and flung to a new planet, where they encounter quite a different set of beings who have no acquaintance with the earth culture which the humans represent, and who possess a desire for perfection. The human representatives of an earthly culture fall under their influence and become changed. The charm of the new people conquers them. Then the worker develops a

desire to return to earth, which is gratified. Arriving on earth, he is reborn with a new faith in love and beauty which proves to be all that is necessary to unite him to the capitalist, professor, prostitute, and the rest who return to earth and are reborn in a similar manner. Having revealed the Key of Class Harmony, the play ends.

This curious mixture of science and ethics was clearly meant to appeal both to the Left and Right. There was the Machine idea and improvisation for the worker, and purification for the cultured. The only positive thing in the play was the elimination of the old mysticism which the bolsheviks have banned together with metaphysics, the higher trend of philosophy and religion, that is, speculative thought generally, in favour of a positive mysticism.

A play called "Dva" ("Two"), a sort of Jekyll and Hyde play, was a good illustration of improvisation. The principal character was a mathematician with a dual personality, able to change his character at will. He demonstrated this in various ways by playing a very old parchment-like mathematician, then a young and active sailor, then an aristocrat. This psychological quick-change artist was in love with a painter's wife, who he tried to win by adopting many disguises. In the end he had a fit of madness and strangled the daughter. The part was very powerfully acted by a young actor of great promise named Chekov. The second piece was "Mycha" (Agony). In this production the scene and actors were decorated with a marble pattern thrown over them by lantern slides. Obviously the intention of the magic lantern lighting effect was to put the agony under marble restraint. Whether it succeeded or not I cannot say. The pattern got in the way so often I could not see the agony or the agonised. Though I disliked the pattern from the lantern slides frolicking among the chairs and tables, and taking liberties with the actors' faces, to say nothing of their make-up, I enjoyed the acting very much. If these plays were improvised, as I was assured they were, it was a very notable achievement,

and certainly points the way to a new spontaneous and collective form of high-brow play.

There is no doubt that the early years of the Revolution hatched a remarkable brood of theories of play production which were nurtured by the Machine and the practical collective needs of a new society. With the coming of peaceful and more favourable conditions for experiments the theories increased. The Semperant handled the new theory called "Titanism." Another theory was put into practice at the Peredvijnogo theatre (Traveling theatre) at Leningrad. Its two directors, P. P. Haideburov and N. F. Skarskaia, were both theoreticians and practitioners of a high order. They established their theatre at the commencement of the century. It was conceived of as a means of serving the best ideals of art, and social life connected with art. From the start it had been concerned with the eternal question of the mystery of human beings. It aimed to unite the best spiritual forces of all classes in Russia, and sought to realise its ideals both in its permanent home at Leningrad and during its tours in Russia, when it visited many towns with its company and staff, repertory, decorations, costumes, in short, all its agents. In the difficult years since 1914 it contrived to continue its aim at the highest while building according to new creative methods elaborated at its own studio by their initiator, N. F. Skarskaia. Among the outstanding features of the theatre were the strong collective unity of the actors; the freedom of the actor, from whom the servile characteristics of the conventional actor had been removed; and the abolition of the prompter (owing to improvisation).

There had been in this theatre, as indeed in all the significant theatres composing the New theatre, a steady and constant search for form in which to put the ideals to be communicated. Form was based on improvisation. But it was a deeper improvisation than most of the Left Wing theatres applied. It was an improvisation wrapped up with the mystery of the actor himself. Following the example of all the present-day Russian

theatres, the Travelling theatre placed actor and idea first. Then came the spectator. Between the two there was a unity. It was obtained by the attitude of the spectator towards the actor. He must not be merely in a receptive mood. He must add to what the actor has to give him.

What is the creative actor? How is he produced? These were the questions implicit in the method of the Travelling theatre. The answers were contained in the application of the method. The inquiry set up was a metaphysical one which very soon buried the inquirer beneath a heap of metaphysical terms, soul, spirit, substance, consciousness, truth, and so on. At least that was the impression one got from reading Skarskaia's long explanation.

Briefly, to him the creative actor is a being with a mystery within him. Within him, too, is the reservoir of sensibility and the creative power that actuates the external organs of motion. This mystery spontaneously rises into the voluntary, or region of the will, and finally after five stages the material and conditions are prepared for the manifestation of the creative act. A similar method of improvising the creative act was followed by Tairov, the director of the Kamerny theatre. Skarskaia did not describe his theory in these words, but these words describe Skarskaia's theory.

The seed of the creative act is, according to Skarskaia, a fundamental emotion—joy, fear, anger, etc., and the business of the creative actor is to organise this emotion and all the emotions belonging to it, as it makes its long ascent till it originates the creative word or movement. Thus "the task of the actor is to be a master of emotion, so as to express the substance of the mystery (the fundamental emotion) which is in him, and from which comes the word or movement or both. He must communicate to the spectator this mystery or fundamental emotion, as we call it, so as to let him take the creative way."

The realisation of the fundamental emotion is in five stages.

These stages are concerned with seeking and finding the fundamental emotion. They correspond to the three stages of seeking and finding adopted by Alexander Tairov. Indeed there was a good deal of resemblance in the theories and methods of the two theatres, the Travelling and the Kamerny. The directors of both strongly believed in a brain-and-body disciplined actor and theatre. Such an actor was to take full possession of his emotions, to play with them creatively, and to clothe himself in the result. He must use a subjective, disciplined, self-effacing technique for the purpose. How far this proposed mastery of material, means, and conditions can be carried is an open question as yet. It should be said that this metaphysical exploration became subordinated to bolshevist materialist requirements. Whatever the method might be, the content must contain the ideology to be communicated to the common folk.

In 1918 the Travelling theatre began to apply the new method, first in its studio, then in plays produced at factories. As with the Kamerny theatre, the new method was applied to classics and other plays. One of the directors, P. P. Haideburov, has described in a little book of notes, "The Birth of Spectacle," how this may be done. The plays with which he deals include Tolstoi's "Power of Darkness," Alexis Tolstoi's "Death of Ivan the Terrible," Chekov's "Cherry Orchard," Bjornsen's "Beyond our Power," Chekov's "Ivanov," Maeterlinck's "Miracle of St. Antony," and Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet." All the characters in "Romeo and Juliet," he observes, are very young and gay, and the fundamental note of the play is youth and joy. He sees a sign of tragedy which he believes is only perceptible when we forget the tragic side. "The tragedy of the play, the tragic moments of it, will come out when we shall forget about them." The foundation of the tragic element in the play is found "in the error and joy, laughter and tears born in human beings." We may take it that joy is the emotion which should be used to organise the system of emotions in the play. Some persons think that love is the predominating emotion.

The resemblance between the methods of the Kamerny theatre and the Travelling theatre stops, I think, with acting. The brain and body discipline of the actor is similar in both theatres. The stages and scenery are different. For instance, the production at the Travelling theatre of "The Carnival of Life," a piece taken from the French, showed no traces of the search for rhythmic harmony in stage and scenery. The scene consisted of a movable transparent three-fold screen. Through the left side could be seen the revellers, and through the transparent back screen a bedroom. The space formed by the two sides of the screen and the right side of the stage composed a shop. In the second scene this screen was turned so that the bedroom took the centre of the stage, the shop was behind the transparent side wall, and the entrance to pleasure gardens was seen through the transparent back wall. The contrasts of life and death obtained by this means were very striking. But of course the flat screens and the flat stage had nothing to do with the predominant emotion or spirit of the play, the mad delirium of human life together with the sickening horror of death. And yet the new theory said that all the objects and agents of the theatre should be full of it.

2. CENTRE GROUP

(A) STATE THEATRES. 1917-23

I. PLAYS

I now come to the first period of the Centre Group. What I have tried to do is to show the concepts, contents, methods and achievements of the Left Group, not primarily as elements of a revolt against the Russian theatre but as essential contributions towards the building of a new structure, and as the solution of problems dictated by theatricalised collective necessities. At the same time, I have shown that the conditions of revolt were there. The confusion in which the Revolution found the established theatre was due to concepts and ideas, pseudo-

romantic, pseudo-classical, individualistic, and the rest, that had no relation to the new collective epoch and Marxian principles which the Revolution was organised, and which it served to introduce to Russia. It was understood that the theatre must go back to beginnings, must start all over again; or must begin a new existence hand in hand with the present-day natural, mechanical and social sciences. In any case there were confusions to be got rid of so that the common folk might fully receive all that the theatre had to give them.

I have traced the particular task of the Left Group in clearing away some of the confusions, like, for instance, those set up by the pre-revolution vague idea of the relationship between the theatre and human life, of the true function of the theatre, of its content and form, of its place in the life of a nation as an organic part of that life. The Left Group made a strong protest against the confusions caused by the division of society into classes, and the privileged use of the theatre by one or two classes only to the exclusion of the main body of the people. It came to discriminate sharply between what it conceived to be a functional theatre and a non-functional one, a theatre with an auditorium for the few and one with an auditorium and stage common to all, a theatre that lived and thought for the people as a whole, one that reflected endlessly the ever-unfolding sequence of events resulting from material forces, circumstances, influences and minutest human relationships; and a theatre that existed merely to amuse a pleasure-loving section of society. Its discrimination involved a careful defining of new movements, and came to suggest that because of the confusions under which the Theatre has become buried since ancient time, no word calls for clearer definition than Theatre.

The Left Group then did excellent work in discriminating between the truly functional post-revolution theatre and the pseudo-functional pre-revolution theatre. One section of it broke with continuity and another partly maintained it.

The Centre Group tells a different story. It followed the

collective tendency of the Left Group but it maintained continuity in such a way as to appear to represent the romantic and classical spirit. This spirit would have had about as much chance of acceptance by the common folk as the proletarian point of view had by class-society in Tsarist days, but for the man who upheld it and the purpose for which he did so. The Left Group wanted current events in plays and settings realistically and brutally portraying the circumstances of the daily life, the economic struggles and changes of the labouring class. Lunacharski, the Minister for Education and Art who controlled the Centre Group—a Group consisting of the old Imperial State theatres and Opera houses—owing to his educational bent was led to discriminate sharply between what he conceived to be the educational purpose of the theatre and the merely actualist one; while his cultural leaning towards all forms of art, old and recent, but not more recent than futurism, disposed him to draw heavily on classical and romantic forms of art with which to clothe his theatricalised educational material as the best means to connect the mind of a primitive art-loving folk with his pedagogics and to hypnotise them with Marxian principles. To him the old methods and forms of art were the best kind of hypnotism, the best stuff with which to sugar the cultural-educational pill.

Thus from the beginning he introduced methods of hypnotism which had a strong conservative tendency in opposition to the less subtle methods of the Left Group which were strongly and definitely radical. He explained his attitude as an attempt to surround Marx, as the new great leader, with an atmosphere of romanticism calculated to excite in the romantically-disposed common folk a sentiment of admiration. In other words, he used traditional form to introduce education in the light of Marx. Some would call it putting a new content into old bottles—the new content being the Marxian materialistic conception of history according to the Gospel of Lenin.

Lunacharski's early method of influencing the common

folk called forth a great deal of opposition from the extremists of the Left Group. To them the high road to the New theatre was plain. It was one to be traversed by the common folk who should attain the desired end by digging a common experience out of themselves unaided by corrupting influences of the past. To this Lunacharski replied that only by the past could the present be realised. The practical problem before him was to educate and thereby lead the common folk to an appreciation of perfection in those art forms which it had inherited but could not clearly understand. Not till it understood and appreciated its heritage could groups of artists advance knowing that whatever they did would be intelligently criticised and would act as an inspiration to all who saw their works. Running through his arguments in support of his cultural attitude is the definition of the New theatre as a school in which he recognises the new audience as a pupil learning and occupying the centre of the stage for the purpose. He interprets this theatricalised study as a new general method of helping the audience (as a pupil) to think thoroughly and completely in a Marxian way.

In supporting a cultural-educational basis of the New theatre, Lunacharski was actually supporting the point of view of the Government. His development during the first period of the building was therefore that of the Government and it may be described much as the Russian official journals, like the Russian Review, have described it. The plan of the Centre, or cultural-educational theatre was in the air for a short time. The earliest theatrical policy of the bolshevist Government was one of non-interference. They left things alone, to be developed by circumstances. Then came the Ministry for Education. The People's Minister for Education was Lunacharski, who realised fully that it was necessary in art expression, for any new movement or general tendency to develop its strength in free combat and contrast with the forms and 'philosophies' of art that it is striving to supplant. The

Ministry for Education, having taken over the nationalised theatres, brought them within the reach of all classes of the community. It gave to the theatrical workers themselves the task of choosing the plays, ballets, and operas to be performed. It gave them control over method of production as well as reasonable choice of repertory. And then it left the various movements to develop or to die without interference or constraint.

There were five essential changes. The first essential change in the making of a popular culture theatre was that of converting the established theatre into a free or one-function theatre by the elimination of money and the introduction of tickets. The commercial idea—the idea that the theatre was originally built and supported by gold, that gold purchased everything—plays, actors, scenery, had to be overcome, and its evils swept away. So the motive of profit was eliminated as far as possible. Regarding the ticket system, it was said officially that, in some theatres almost all tickets—at one time, at least—were distributed through Trade Unions. In others the Government departments issued the bulk of the tickets to their employees, many of whom were from the better educated sections of the people. At one or two theatres most of the tickets were sold in the ordinary way, but the prices were very low, and the theatres received in consequence a subsidy from the Government when necessary.

The second essential change, that of making a popular culture audience, was brought about by the first. The theatres (owing to the free and low price ticket system) were certain of an audience; for the Russian people are intensely appreciative of art in any form, and the most violent upheave could not destroy their interest in the theatre.

The third essential change, that of making popular culture players out of unpopular materials, took place as follows. The Russian theatre inherited from the Tsarist regime a peculiarly cultured class of players. The theatre used to be dominated by the nobility and the “intelligentsia”—a class

aloof from the rest of the people and its artistic interests. Commercialism also affected the Russian theatre; but the "revue" was not known there; and in some ways the Russian theatre was as different from the average British or American one as the "corps de ballet" is from the "beauty-chorus."

It might have been expected that Russian actors and actresses would have chosen to go on playing the comedies and tragedies of Russia before the Revolution, those plays of personal relations, ironic and rather bitter, which had made the reputation of the great Russian playwrights of the last century, like Chekov and Gogol. But all actors know and desire the response of an audience; its imaginative sympathy helps them not only to finer work, but to the fullest enjoyment of their work, while even the greatest play seems to fall flat if the audience is out of tune with it in thought or feeling. And it was this responsive sympathy that the Russian players set themselves to arouse. This means that although many actors left Russia soon after the Revolution rather than appear in revolutionary plays, many remained, and of course, preferred to appear in plays that called forth sympathy from the audience.

So we come to the fourth essential change, the making of popular culture plays. As already pointed out, at first the old species of plays was retained. It was too difficult during the Revolution and immediately after to produce new plays. So there were adaptations of old ones ("The Dawn"), reproductions of old ones in new settings (Tairov), improvisations (Proletcult), or old ones entire (Centre). But later, when the distribution of theatre tickets had been organised, and the theatre knew what sort of audience to expect, when the material difficulties of supply and lighting had to some extent been overcome, and all those whose work was in any way connected with the theatre were given certain privileges as to housing and a ration of food higher than that of the majority of the people in the city—when this had been achieved, all engaged in the theatre came together

to form their own play making and managing committees, repertory committees, and critical councils.

With these theatrical "soviets" at work, there followed a process of elimination. "In the life of post-revolutionary Russia there was pity and terror enough, says one writer, and all the stark material of tragedy—except despair. Those who despaired of Russia were of no use to her in a time of reconstruction and struggle; some of them left a country whose development they could neither help nor understand; the remainder ceased to affect its life in any way save as a dead weight to be carried, so many mouths to be fed. The men whose lives lay in the open fields or amongst the great machines, into whose hands the future of the country had passed, had no sympathy with the drama of the 'middle emotions,' the psychology—or pathology—of the discontent in little and rather meaningless lives. A high wall hid them from the shadowed paths of 'the Cherry Orchard,' and its blossoms were too brittle for the time in which they lived. The first representations by the Centre theatre took the form of romantic melodrama. It was felt that the naïve and exaggerated emotions, the action and the events of melodrama would suit the new audience. Later, and for much the same reason, came romantic plays."

The fifth and final change was that effected by the changes in the population. The Revolution had affected every side of life; the whole country, its philosophy and its religion, its conception of the present and its hope for the future was changing. And, of course, as time went on the toilers would put on different characteristics and exhibit different moods harmonising with the different trends of thought and action.

The first stage of Lunacharski's development may then be said to have been a romantic one, a retrogression not an advance. In the theatres under his control, as in poetry and literature, the post-revolution, the heroic and romantic points of view first found strong expression. To the brilliant writers who had sung about the promised revolution in the old days, when it actually

came, it seemed an act of deliverance. Henceforth they would be able to express their visions and dreams without hindrance. They would live undisturbed in their ivory towers, and follow the example of Alexander Blok, the poet, by regarding the Revolution as Holy Banditry and by investing the revolutionists with the nimbus of Saint Bandit—a Bandit sworn to the solemn purpose of relieving Russia not of its great traditional virtues, but of its foulness of human life. The result was that poets, æsthètes, and dilettanti poured forth a stream of pseudo-romantic nonsense till hardship and suffering touched them and showed them that they were the victims of their own mental confusion, and what they had defined as romanticism was stern and bitter realism. Then some fled to foreign lands, and others remained to take up the common task.

The romantic movement which Lunacharski started in the Central theatre had the effect of stimulating the performance of old plays and operas, which would have been banned if the Left extremists had had their way. According to the latter they communicated corrupting tendencies of pre-war literature, art and social life. Amongst the pieces represented were Schiller's "William Tell," Hugo's "Le Roi S'Amuse," and "Ruy-Blas," and a number of plays of the sword and cloak, enamoured and ambitious princes, and daring lovers species, inviting a display of costumes and colours which Lunacharski assumed were dear to the primitive spectator. Gradually he came to select old plays with a social content, being careful to remove the reactionary "poison" about their roots, and so he passed to a species of play of which the revolutionary content was mainly his own, and the form a romantic or classical one. Thus he attained a kind of balance and moderation in an exhibition of cultural knowledge of the past and sympathy with the present. But even this concession to the forces of the Left was attacked by them as compromise, and the war on the theatrical Front continued.

On the whole, this early romantic revival caused the extremists to revolt. They said it was reactionary. They wanted

a form of drama that would put a virile emphasis on present-day thought and action, not one that was approved of by sickly romanticists who were wailing from their ivory towers, ready for flight the moment naked truth made its appearance.

In 1920, came the end of the romantic revival and most of the romanticists scattered in various parts of Europe. Lunacharski's own play "The People" was produced. It was an attempt to represent new theories and ideas in a traditional form. It showed no intention to break completely with romanticism.

2. OPERAS

The radical critics continued to disagree with Lunacharski's methods with the result that in 1922 he was seen in conflict with his opponents over the production of "Carmen" at the Big theatre in Moscow. It seems that "Carmen" was an experiment by Fedorovski and Sanin in realistic expressionism. In reply to his critics, Lunacharski contended that the form was as it left Bizet's hand. It was a form that was needed on the stage. A realism was needed "which should be native and familiar to us in all its determinants, and at the same time should be unusual, constructed, so to speak, entirely in the new harmony, at the pitch of modern ideas and emotions." . . . "The task of the theatre was not to study Spain from the life and to preserve it on the stage with an illusion of accurate representation, but to observe the manifestations of life, to represent somehow its pulse, its essence, translating life freely into theatrical forms." All of which reads like "operatic reform" guided by the representatives of romanticism. But this definition was made in 1922. Later Lunacharski accepted, as will be shown, the more extreme views of the Left Group.

The so-called reform in opera illustrated by the production of "Carmen," came to infect the operas and ballets produced at the State theatres, and the infective process continued till the Left Group stopped it. The Group got firmly behind the New

theatre and asserted its power by vigorously attacking everything that was in any sense reactionary and demanding its withdrawal together with the expulsion of offending directors. One example of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" appeared in the case of Foregger, the brilliant inventor of machine dances, whose lapse from proletarian grace caused him to retire from his little theatre to seek a bare living in a small dancing academy at Leningrad.

"Carmen" may be reckoned among the best productions of opera during the first period of the Centre theatre, and if it did no more, it proved that this type of entertainment had fully emerged from the confusion of the early days of the Revolution. The productions at the Big and Little theatres Moscow, the Marinski theatre, Leningrad, and other subsidised State theatres, could be described in detail, but "Carmen" describes them all.

I will however briefly describe what I remember of the performance of "Lohengrin" at the Big (Bolshoi) theatre. It was an excellent example of the grandiose or monumental manner in opera. The first thing that struck me was the frantic rush for tickets. Everybody in Moscow seemed to be besieging official places for them. If I had not been specially favoured on this occasion I should never have got in the theatre. The production certainly was the most picturesque, even gorgeous one, from the realistic-expressionist point of view that I had seen. It was a magnificent example of stage pageantry designed to reproduce the legendary atmosphere of the opera. I marvelled at its richness of effect and wondered how a nation that had gone through, and was still going through unparalleled vicissitudes could provide such a banquet of costume and colour, and how the performers working under extreme difficulties of shortage of food, inadequate housing, lack of proper everyday clothing, and so on, could still give of their very best. I was struck by the reverent enthusiasm of the audience of common folk that completely filled the immense auditorium, and by the

fine condition of the interior of the theatre, which proved beyond doubt that it had been very carefully preserved.

The scenes of the opera passed before one like a succession of old Germain paintings, rich in form and colour and composed of masses of early German figures, knights, soldiers, dames, children, citizens, in impressive costumes and moving amid a forest of halberts, spears, bannerets, and symbols of all kinds. To heighten their effect the characters were made to move against a rayonnist background, that is, a background resembling the multi-coloured rays of the sun. The handling of the crowds in the big scenes was masterly, but fine mass effects realised in the Left theatres by the use of wooden and other constructions were lacking.

Still, gorgeous and effective as the whole thing was, it invited severe criticism. It was kaleidoscopic, much too elaborate, it lacked simplicity, unity and continuity. The coloured light that flooded the scenes was too diffuse. It coloured everybody. To me the worst thing was the method of putting successive principal performers on a circular platform in the centre of the stage kept clear for the purpose, where they resembled nothing so much as political speakers occupying a soap box in turn.

Looking back from this point of the road which the ballet and opera were taking a large number of productions were to be noted. A list is given in the appendices.

The sociological value of this early and brief reaction to old exhibitions will be evident to those who bear in mind that they were bound up with cultural-education, folk-culture and folklore and folk-dances. There was an untiring search for the best examples of the latter. By consulting the aforementioned list it will be seen that names of Rimski-Korsakov, Glinka, Borodin, Serov, Rossini and Delibes are included.

There are two other facts of importance to be noticed as belonging to the period of opera and ballet between the first days of the Revolution when all was confusion, and the passions

172 THE NEW SPIRIT IN THE RUSSIAN THEATRE

were grey, and the day of "Carmen" when opera took the stage with a burst of suddenly glory (though a glory not welcomed by the Left). First there were no proletarian operas. By that is meant no operas constructed by the worker-intellectuals produced with the aim of putting the Revolution and Civil war on the stage, and thereby encouraging new political and social opinions. The first all-bolshevist opera was performed in 1925.

It is true that musicians came forth to construct such music. Some of the younger pre-revolutionary composers (like Prokoviev, Medtner, Rachmaninov, who were attracted by the revolutionary outburst at first, but later fled from Russia, and others who accepted the new regime) tried to compose opera reflecting the social revolution and its undeviating sociology. They introduced the hymn and song of the young revolutionists and the broad mass of industrial workers, and constructed with a definite propaganda purpose, but without success.

Still much was done to induce the proletarians to produce music of their own. Music studios, clubs and workshops were established everywhere. Composers emerged to compose music only for the Mass. They composed for the great mass spectacles and demonstrations and festivals. They introduced the music of everyday sounds, made their music reflect the "soul" of the Mass, its struggles and victories. They did everything they could to stir up the common folk just as other agents of bolshevism were doing. Some people said they were not thinking of music, they were thinking of political and social tendencies. Let that be as it may, there did come later musical forms strictly in harmony with spirit of the epoch. Machine "music" for instance.

The second fact is the bolshevizing of old operas and ballets, or making musical forms constructed to reflect the spirit of their time, a means to bolshevist end. As will be shown in the second period of the New theatre, the opera house became as functional as the theatre. The concept of the function of music

—namely that it should act as an emotional and cultural exaltation of the common life of the people—was changed for the sterner one that it should take an active part in the building of the new Republic, and in particular, communicate only the ideology of the new society. In consequence many of the operas that were chosen during 1917-21 to stimulate the æsthetic feelings of the Mass and to afford relief to a population faced with the fearful aftermath of the Revolution, were, in later and more comfortable years, barred from the Moscow and Leningrad State theatres because their “doctrines” were considered anti-revolutionary. To take one sample, “Lohengrin” was condemned as a work of religious mysticism and suspended for a time. Its performance was renewed only because the selection committee accepted a powerful plea that was advanced in favour of its retention in the State theatre’s repertory. Works that replaced the banned ones became fashionable mainly on account of the circumstances surrounding the birth and life of the composers, which were supposed to give the latter an attitude of revolt and to indicate their sympathy for the lower order of society. Thus Beethoven and Bach have been claimed, rightly or wrongly, by the bolsheviks as composers whose works contain elements of revolt. Likewise, Dickens has had social indignation read into his “Cricket On The Hearth.”

(3) THE STATE CHILDREN’S THEATRE

In pursuit of the Government’s policy of cultural-education by means of the theatre, a State Children’s theatre was established in Moscow in 1919. It was subsidised by the Government and tickets were free and distributed to the children in the theatre. The initiator of the plan, and subsequent director of the theatre, was Madam Henriette Pascal, a beautiful and highly-accomplished Roumanian actress-producer. She conceived the theatre as a medium of child exaltation and liberation. Officially, for Lunacharski was concerned with its organisation and upkeep,

it stood for child training and child saving. The latter function was developed some time later when the problem of waifs became acute. The question of financial support in its early stage led to the appearance in a book written by an American of a very grave aspersion on Madam Pascal's character. When the matter was brought to her notice she declared in my presence that money was provided by the sale of her jewels in Paris. She considered that the attack was very cowardly because it was made on people who were not in a position to defend themselves. In 1924 she came to London with the object of establishing a much needed Children's theatre there. She opened a studio in Kensington and formed an Advisory Committee which included Mr. J. T. Grein and Mr. Ashley Dukes. But nothing came of her proposals mainly owing I think to prejudice against Russia, and she left England. In her letters to me she commented very strongly on the fact that Russia and everyone who showed the least sympathy for it, were suspect.

When I first visited the Moscow Children's theatre it was under her direction. On the whole it struck me as a very extraordinary affair. It was like a Children's theatrical world in which children were encouraged in every way to theatricalise their experiences and to improvise forms with their imagination and sense of beauty much as a child improvises with sand and constructs forms in harmony with the movements of its imagination. This world was not merely a stage, auditorium and a number of dressing-rooms. It was a place for everything connected with the writing, production, performance, criticism, discussion of plays. It was a theatre that collected everything—designs for scenery, costumes, ideas discovered in plays performed. It was in fact a sort of theatrical outlook tower, where one could survey the mind of the child as it was being moulded by theatrical influences acting upon natural theatrical instincts.

The content showed Madam Pascal putting the child mind on the stage so as to exhibit its imagination, sense of beauty,



"NUTCRACKER"

A Henriette Pascal production at the Moscow State Children's theatre. The story is illustrated by a gallant show girl, one of the Moscow children, and how he remained his

and an awakening to the problems of the new collective life. But the latter with its bolshevism and expression of the bolshevist forms of development of young proletarians did not become fashionable till a much later date of the theatre's history.

At the time of my first visit the theatre was reflecting the sentiment of heroic-romanticism found in the State theatres, a sentiment that delighted children. But it was not easy to find existing suitable plays. As a result Madam Pascar adapted and revised and rewrote stories to suit the child audience, just as Meierhold improvised on existing plays in order to reflect the improvisation of the Revolution on society. She chose stories well-known to Russian children, like Kipling's and Mark Twain's.

The theatre and its work had a considerable sociological interest. This interest extended to the performances of theatricalisation of social life in the open, in which children took part. A classification would be as follows: History: Romantic tendency (Tom Sawyer); Classic tendency (An Egyptian Play); Religion: Domestic, Mystic, Annunciation, Birth; Psychology: Fantasy, Folklore; Social: Collective tendency; Street Pageantry, etc.; Education: courage, heroism, citizenship; Training: theatrical workshop, stage, and play requirements.

The plays were well staged and their performance was uniformly good. But the serious enthusiasm of the child audience was what mostly took my attention. Children crowded the auditorium. They followed the performance with deepest and keenest interest. It should be said that they represented all elements of Russian society such as it was at that time, and were truly democratic in the sense that no one was given preference in the matter of seats. During the interval they seemed to swarm everywhere. They filled the corridors, the stairs, the vestibule, all the spacious rooms of a theatre that had once been a rich man's mansion.

I will give one sample of the fare that they consumed. The piece was "Schelkunchik I Myshing Tsar" ("The

Nutcracker and the King of the Mice.'") The time was Christmas Eve. The father and his child were preparing the Christmas tree. The godfather of the child arrived. He was a watchmaker. He gave his goddaughter a nutcracker. The nutcracker was in the form of a wooden mechanical doll. She played with it and put it to bed very carefully. At night she had a dream. She saw the King of the Mice come forth with his followers and attack Nutcracker. All her dolls came to life, and took part in the battle on Nutcracker's side. But the latter was gradually overcome, but just at the critical point the child threw a shoe, which frightened the mice away and saved Nutcracker. On another occasion she was ill. The godfather came and told her a story about a Princess, the King of the Mice, and a strong Nut. In this way the child learnt that Nutcracker was very ugly, that he will become beautiful if he succeeds in killing the King of the Mice with seven heads, and if a little girl will love him in spite of his ugliness. The child fell asleep. Nutcracker asked her to get him a sword. She did so, and Nutcracker fought the King of the Mice, killed him, took off his seven little golden crowns, and as a sign of appreciation gave them to the child. Nutcracker had now recovered his good looks, and he and the child set out for the fairyland of Lemonade Rivers.

When the child woke from her dream, much moved by what she has seen, she related everything to her parents. The godfather arrived again, bringing with him his nephew from Nuremburg. The child recognised in the young man her old friend, Nutcracker, who cured himself of his ugliness by killing the King of the Mice. The young man thanked the child for saving his life and restoring his good looks.

The Nutcracker play lent itself to an ingenious and imaginative treatment that appeals to the mind of a child. For instance, the godfather illustrates the story of how Nutcracker lost his beauty, by a gallant show. Again, the representation of

a fairyland, where everything is sweet, including the lemons, was exceedingly charming and fantastical. The strong colours being just what we associate with Russian decorators, and pleases a child.

I cannot help thinking that "Nutcracker" had a socialist interest. It was an adaptation of a story of the curse of the King of the Mice. There was a king with a young daughter. His castle was overrun with mice. Fearing that they would devour his daughter, he decides to kill them. The King of the Mice warns the other king that if he carries out his intention great harm will befall his daughter. The king, however, lays in a stock of cats who keep the mice busy. One night the child's nurse falls asleep, and the mice bite the child and so cast an evil spell over her. But the curse shall be removed if she marries a handsome prince. The curse is however transferred to the prince who becomes Ugly Nutcracker. How the curse is removed is shown in the play. Substitute the Capitalist for the King of the Mice and the Workers for the Prince and Princess and you get a Capital and Labour socialist play.

4. THE STATE CIRCUS

Since the Revolution one of the most popular places of entertainment has been the circus. Traditional and untraditional factors account for its hold on the common folk, especially the industrial workers. The sternly disciplined mechanical movements of the performers, the sweeping away of traditions and the introduction of unaccustomed features have appealed strongly to an audience drawn from the workshop and factory, and led by a great upheaval to expect new tendencies in all departments of social life and action.

The Government took steps at an early date to establish a State Circus in view of the State and popular service that an institution of the kind could render. They recognised its value as an instrument of political expression and as a means of exercising control over the public, and beyond this its capacity to

become, in association with the theatre, an organic part of the life of the nation.

They laid the foundation by closing the variety theatres and music-halls, and throwing the circus open for semi-variety and theatrical exhibitions, like revue and pantomime.

Thus they conceived it as an integral part of the theatre. Its function was to improvise on the revolutionary and social themes, and at the same time to act as a sort of Government censor. One of the innovations made by the Government was the introduction of new types of performers, in particular a clown who replaced the traditional one, and by his unusual performance crowded the circus night after night to its utmost capacity.

The real reason for the popularity of the circus with the working-class folk was a traditional one. The art form of the circus is the victory of human genius over the material medium. The circus stands for the truth of unadorned human skill and not for the make-believe of the theatre. Its content, form and technique are more in harmony with the energies of the working-class than the conventional theatre and its objects and agents. The circus content is not cumbered with metaphysics, philosophy, psychology, and the rest of the literary theatre stuff. Its methods are not those æsthetic crudities that clog up the way through which plays in Western Europe and America have to pass. Everything about it approximates to the Machine idea, with which the Russian industrial worker was and is still pre-occupied. It has an ideal form of stage and auditorium which automatically solve the perplexing problem of sight line, and shows the actor in the round or three dimensions. All its sight lines are correct, and every part of the performance is seen. Its performers are highly-trained. Their expression is organised precisely on those lines which the worker-actor seeks to follow, and they are therefore capable of giving the latter an excellent idea of what extreme physical training can do in the matter of promoting sternly organised acting. The circus performance,

whether by a trapeze artiste, juggler, acrobat, wrestler, boxer, bareback rider, or any other person, is actually a synthesis of play, acting, and scenery. The performer is author, actor, and decorator in one. He combines the best principles and qualities of expression. Take a balancing act, every part of the balancer acts—every part is keyed up to sustain a particular movement at a particular moment. Everything is and must be right. The least false movement, even of a hair's breadth, would hurl the performer to death. Moreover, he evokes his own scenery. He surrounds himself with an air of intensity which blots out everything else. Watching him, we are conscious of nothing but the creative act in which his trained and tamed output of emotion and energy clothe him. If he be a highly-trained clown, it is the exuberant drollery and fancy which informs him as with an ever-changing plastic form.

Studio artists have long found inspiration in the circus. The most sensitive philosophers and writers have always acknowledged the pre-eminence of the pure form of art of the circus over the artifice of the theatre. Look how Gautier praised Oriel the clown. Look at the praise given to Cinqualli. The post-revolution Russian circus exerted great influence on the men of the theatre because it contained those methods of improvisation which were needed in the New theatre. Eisenstein invented a circus stage for the Proletcult, and circus forms and appliances made their appearance in theatres and opera houses, wherever acrobatic acting was to be found. Clowning, too, became fashionable. In short, the circus suggested four possibilities to the theatre directors:—1, a new species of speechless drama; 2, a new form of arena stage; 3, a new system of acting by which the actor spins a play out of himself; 4, a new style of scenery evoked by the actor himself.

The new clown, who attracted a multitude of people to the circus and his "turn," were called on the programme "The Fool and His Majesty The People." He was a kind of bolshevist

Court Fool, and the people was the King or ruler who he amused and suppressed with his wit and jests. This court fool was used by the Government to serve peculiar State and political ends. His aim was to discover and check by means of his jokes and buffoonery dangerous tendencies of thought that occupied the mind of the common folk. He was permitted and encouraged to indulge in a kind of political free speech, to criticise and ridicule and to hold up to public derision the thoughts and actions of the men in power. The plan succeeded. The audience, though doubtless astounded and perhaps frightened by this free speech at a moment when the most rigorous steps were being taken to suppress reaction, succumbed to its novelty and punctuated the very points which the Government wanted it to punctuate. That is, the audience became the victim of a very ingenious confidence trick. The result was that the tendencies dissolved in laughter. The jokes were spread by the public itself, and thus all knew that their secret discontents were known to the Government who being forewarned were also forearmed. The two most celebrated of these clowns were Bim and Bom. They seem to have had special licence conferred on them by the Government to carry their insults to the authorities to the extreme. Nothing was sacred to them. The stories of their biting wit and deadly thrusts would fill a considerable volume. A typical one was told in the "Manchester Guardian" of how they entered the ring carrying a great sack. To Bim's question, "Have you been getting wood?" Bom replied, "No, here is the wood," and he held up a match. "Then what is in the sack?" inquired Bim. "The necessary permits," replied Bom. The sharp censure on the bureaucracy is clear.

The appreciation of the Government of this particular detective-like use of the circus has increased and within recent years more than one circus workshop has been established with the aim of giving clowns a political education, and of producing the political satirical material which clowns so educated require.

(B) RIGHT CENTRE**1. THE OLD JEWISH THEATRE. THE HABIMA COMPANY**

Situated in a decayed quarter of Moscow is a dilapidated and rather crazy building. Outwardly it has the appearance of a private house which has been neglected for years. You enter by a portico containing an entertainment bill in old Jewish language. The passage and the rooms adjoining the passage are panelled in oak. You pass up an old wooden staircase that brings you to a largish room which appears to be intended for a gymnasium. If in use, you will see a number of young people of both sexes hard at work on physical culture. You next pass into a much larger room, the walls of which are covered with grey canvas. You notice that it has 126 seats, which, like the walls, are covered with grey canvas. The arrangement of the seats may strike you as unusual. There are four rows level with what looks like a part of the floor partitioned off to serve as a stage. At the back of these are three rows rising in tiers and divided down the centre by an opening which forms the entrance to the auditorium, and resembles an entrance to circus seats. You notice that the stage is very small. It has a proscenium and curtain. But there are no footlights and no orchestra. When the curtain is up, the feet of the front row spectators rest on the stage and you feel that they must sometimes get mixed up with those of the very acrobatic actors.

This is the Old Jewish theatre at Moscow which once upon a time housed one of the most remarkable Jewish companies in the world, called the Habima Company. I say once upon a time because this company, which originally came from Palestine, has long had the intention to return there. It has been on tour for some time, and although I have followed its tours, I am unable at present to say whether it has yet fulfilled its intention.

In the Habima theatre, as it may be called, we have a new Hebrew theatre in the making, just as the Moscow State Jewish

182 THE NEW SPIRIT IN THE RUSSIAN THEATRE

theatre under Granovski is a new Yiddish theatre in the making. Both are examples of bolshevist tolerance towards the Jews—a tolerance which has shown itself in the support of Jewish theatres elsewhere, for instance the Jewish State theatres in the Ukraine and in White Russia.

The origin of this highly important theatre is a little obscure. From what I was told at the theatre I was led to understand that the nucleus of the company came from Palestine, that Stanislavski founded a studio for it and placed the studio under the direction of a very talented young Jew named Vakhtangov, who died in 1922. He was succeeded by Gnessin and N. L. Tchemax, who continued his policy. A part of this policy was to assist the new Jewish nationalist movement by spreading the use of the Hebrew language not only among those of the general public who were supporting the Zionist movement, but among actors in all parts of Europe who might thus be induced to go to Palestine to support the ambitious scheme of the establishment of a great Jewish national theatre. This project was quite distinct from that of establishing the Yiddish theatre on the widest basis.

Theatrically, Vakhtangov's policy was to interpret the soul of the Jew at its highest and best, and to produce a Jewish actor perfectly fitted for the task, one who should regard the theatre as a temple and himself as a priest fully ordained to transmit its message and perform its rites. Vakhtangov placed the actor first as Stanislavski had taught him to do. But he differed from Stanislavski in his method of training the actor. Stanislavski told the actor to subordinate himself to the spirit, or purpose of the play, and to become an integral part of the company of actors that should play as one man. He taught him the principles of the ensemble. Vakhtangov's way to attain unity was to produce an actor sternly disciplined in body and brain, so disciplined as to become master of his very brain cells, his muscles and his sinews.

Whether it was this discipline that led the members of the Habima company to practice self-denial, to form a kind of religious community, to develop their spiritual side by living together for themselves and their "mission," I do not know. But the fact remains that they bound themselves together by ties in a closed circle and separated themselves from the rest of the theatrical world.

Before analysing Vakhtangov's method of production, let me state his aim. I am dealing with his method of production at the Habima theatre which differed from that of his remarkable production of the Chinese play "Turandot" elsewhere. The most significant thing about it was to make his work deeply Jewish in spirit by placing on the stage a strictly Jewish content, dignified and national, and finding a form that should communicate it perfectly to the audience. He was a revolutionist but only in the theatrical sense. His revolutionary ideas were not violent ones. He respected continuity and preserved some of the old values, but he did not fight for them. There is no evidence that he wanted to shake the theatre to its foundations, as Meierhold did. Yet he followed the new tendencies and made a considerable contribution to the New theatre. His contribution to radical ideas probably came from Tibet. He was interested in Tibetan mysteries. He was fascinated by plays with occult themes, and he based his system of acting on Yoga practice. It was the discipline of the latter that carried him beyond the Moscow Art theatre actualist and psychological systems.

His methods, as described to me at his theatre, were:

1. As to acting. The entire production of emotion and energy at the command of the actor was put under conscious control by a system of taming and training till the actor could play with it as the wireless operator plays with electric current.

2. As to production.

- (a) The play was read to the assembled company.
- (b) The spirit of the play was sought and found.
- (c) The parts were analysed.

- (d) Every part was built up slowly and carefully with the assistance of the director when necessary.
- (e) Every word was learnt separately.
- (f) The meaning of every gesture and movement was studied.
- (g) Improvisation and association were included. The law of association was seen at work in plays which contained gaps to be filled in by the spectators.

Under these conditions a play took as long as three years to produce and for this reason the company has produced very few plays. A significant effect on the acting was that of highly individualising each character, making each a unity in itself, while binding all characters together by the predominating spirit of the play.

The scarcity of plays at the Habima was due not alone to the length of time taken to produce them but to the non-existence of plays in the true Hebrew spirit and language. While there are a great number of Yiddish plays, a repertory of true Hebrew plays has yet to be written. This lack of plays led to the performance of translations and trans-translations at the Habima. The most famous of these was the play known as "Hadebuk" or "Between Two Worlds," performed in Russia; "The Dybbuk," in countries outside Russia. The latter has been played both by the original Habima company and by foreign companies in Western Europe and America, therefore its story must be widely known by now.

It was written by S. Ansky (Rappaport) during 1913-15. The story is simple and suggests a folk-tale. It has been used in more than one play. There is a student who spends his days studying the literal and juridical Talmud in a synagogue. One day a young girl enters with whom he falls in love. But the parents oppose the marriage because they have a wealthy husband in view for their daughter. The young student dies at the end of the first act and his disembodied spirit is transferred to his girl lover, and dictates her intentions. In the

second act the girl is moved by the spirit to reject at the point of marriage her parent's choice. In the third act the spirit is exorcised by a miracle-working rabbi. The girl dies and her spirit joins that of her lover.

Some people are disposed to read a political motive into the play. In the struggle between the two Jewish sects they see the struggle between the old world and the young proletarians. A second play of much significance is "The Eternal Jew," a tragic legend in two acts, by Penskom. Its story is based upon a Talmud legend summed up in the words, "In the days when they were destroying the Church the Messiah was born." The opening scene introduces us to inhabitants of a small town near Jerusalem. To them a messenger arrives with the news that the Temple is destroyed. He says that the Messiah was born in the hour of destruction, and the mother and child are here in their midst. The people believe it, but the authorities do not. They see their authority threatened. A search is made, without result, and the people turn on the prophet, but the authorities now shield him. The authorities send forth representatives, in the belief that they will find nothing. A woman now appears who weeps over the destruction of Jerusalem, and speaks about a child which was born in the hour of destruction. The prophet assumes it is the Messiah. Representatives return affirming the destruction of Jerusalem. The people and the authorities are prepared to accept the word of the prophet. Their attention is directed to the woman and child. There is a tempest and the child disappears, leaving no trace. Here is a rich Jewish subject, a people seeking deliverance from the chaos of the world, and accepting the purity and majesty of a Godhead as the enemy of all evil. These beings live in a state of dirt and destitution near Jerusalem. Their whole time is occupied by trading. They live in ignorance, full of prejudice. All the beauty, force and idealism of life is centred in the Temple at Jerusalem, which symbolises their belief in God. When the Temple is destroyed the soul is taken out of them. When the

Messiah is born, the Temple becomes a human one and the soul is restored. When the child is swept away by a tempest, their soul is taken away again. But the Temple is re-created, and their soul restored once more by Faith. They believe that if they search for the Messiah the Temple of faith will be rebuilt. Meanwhile, as they search they will be carried higher and higher. At the close of the last act the prophet ascends slowly to the highest point of the Temple. This symbolises the ascent of the Jewish soul. Some say it is a bolshevist subject—people seeking to secure liberation from tyranny and to find tolerance in a new form of society.

The forms of both plays were progressive. The setting for the "Dybbuk" was designed by Nathan Altmann in a futurist manner that represented the struggle and rhythms of the action. The scenes were broken up by form and colour and set in motion by various devices. The chairs and tables were set at different angles and levels. In the last scene a long white table was inclined towards the audience in a very telling manner. Effective use was made of concealed lights placed behind different stage objects, for instance, behind a pile of books placed on a table at which four figures were seated, thus carving them into a Rembrandtesque mass. By this means a mystic atmosphere was got.

In "The Eternal Jew" a single construction was used. It consisted of a dull red stationary mass symbolising the Temple. On one side were winding steps leading to the pinnacle of the Temple, up which figures moved slowly to indicate their ascent to the highest point of faith. Platforms at different levels were provided by the architectural projections.

The sociological expression in these plays can be traced in others performed at the theatre of the Bukharest Jews. Thus "The Power of Parentage" expresses the new concept of domestic morality reflected by "The Dybbuk." It exhibits and condemns the cruelty of the old patriarchal morality which led grasping parents to betroth their daughter to wealthy but hateful

suitors, thus condemning her to a wretched life and perhaps to death. "The Power of Darkness" repeats the common note of indignation against the petty and dishonest trading instincts of the small town Jew, which tend to undermine native existence.

(3) RIGHT GROUP

I. THE MOSCOW ART THEATRE STUDIOS

The first period of the Moscow Art theatre has already been described. Associated with the theatre were a number of studios and workshops to which it had given birth, all alike occupied with development of the work of the parent theatre. In addition, there was to the Right the N.E.P. Group of places of entertainment which the New Economic Policy was mainly responsible for bringing into existence, or reviving, seeing that they included entertainment centres which had been suppressed soon after the Revolution. Further, there was the old established theatre of Korsh with a strong Right tendency which later was replaced by a firm Left one, and the theatre was rechristened the New Dramatic theatre.

The Moscow Art theatre studio was a combination of school of acting and a small theatre capable of paying its own way, and intended to supply the parent theatre with efficient players. Thus while it served the function of a school, it also served that of a working theatre. It trained players in the science of the theatre, and instructed them in art and craft work, and beyond this enabled them, through public performances, to gain confidence in themselves and to be prepared to play an important part at the parent theatre at a moment's notice. Thus this kind of theatre studio, which is attached to every theatre of importance in Russia, is both educational and economic.

Stanislavski organised in all nine studios, including the Jewish Habima and an Opera Studio. Since 1923 he has lost them all owing to various causes, but principally to the action of the Government who rewarded some by turning them

into separate theatres. This change will be dealt with presently. Not much need be said here concerning matters of "housing," organisation and work during the early existence of the studios. Generally speaking, they found accommodation in old houses with large rooms that could be converted to theatrical purposes. Take the theatre of the First Studio. It was a large grey chamber with some anti-rooms. It was oblong in shape and accommodated 150 spectators. At one time it had no conventional stage, which helped it to apply the new method of mixing the audience with the action. Later came a stage which allowed pieces to be performed in two ways; the conventional Moscow Art theatre way, that is complete separation between audience and actors, and a new way according to which the actors played all over the auditorium. I saw a Shakespearean play performed in the latter way. It seemed a very good method of overcoming the usual long waits in a Shakespearean performance.

It will be gathered that the Studio's students were disposed to be insurgent. In fact, though they were expected to follow some at least of the traditions of the parent theatre, they were not forbidden to introduce reasonable innovations of their own. This led, in time, to their becoming far more Left than Right. Towards the end of the first period they performed several plays that lent themselves to a bolshevist interpretation. There was "The Flood," an adaptation of an American play. The story shows how a wealthy speculator (a capitalist, as the bolsheviks would say), who is a potential murderer and veritable robber utterly indifferent to human interests, is ruined by a dam, protecting his property, being swept away. Eric XIV, of Sweden, also had a bolshevist motive. It was an attack on a mad king holding absolute power, and doubtless would be placed by the bolsheviks with "Tsar Feodor," performed at the Moscow Art theatre, as a species of play holding kingcraft up to ridicule and contempt. The setting for the "Taming of the Shrew" showed the influence of the Left revolutionary scenic movement on the

right. It consisted of a white wooden stationary construction with levels and angles. Rapid changes of scene were got by the use of curtains, suggesting the influence of the famous neo-Shakespearean curtain stage which Mr. William Poel introduced to the English theatre some years ago. The white setting was designed to take very brilliant colour, especially that worn by the revellers, who brought on a wide range of pure colour, and made an extremely effective ensemble when distributed at different levels.

2. THE N.E.P. GROUP

The unrest of the peasants in 1922 brought about a crisis which compelled the Government to make economic concessions not only to the peasants in particular, but to the trading class in general. The Nepmen, as the traders were called, tried to place their individualistic position on a firm footing once more. They succeeded in doing so for a time, but later their ardour was damped by the discovery that they were being closely watched by the uncompromising extremist bolsheviks who had very little sympathy for middle-class shopkeepers who threatened to undermine proletarian interests. From the moment the New Economic Policy became law, the Nepmen commenced to encourage the renewal of their own forms of entertainment. This they were able to do because the policy invited some private managers to open theatres and others to arrange their programmes to suit the taste of the resurrected middle-class. At the same time they were compelled to submit to Government censorship of a kind. This censorship was not however sufficient to prevent theatres like those of the Ermitage Group, the Korsh, and other theatres from moving towards a species of distinctly middle-class play.

(A) THE KORSH THEATRE

Stanislavski has described the Korsh theatre as one of the best private theatres in Russia, where the principal actors of its time appeared. It was established in 1882 as the Russian

Dramatic theatre. It became one of the theatres frequented by the intelligentsia, and at one time, owing to the advanced activities and ideas of its director, F. A. Korsh, enjoyed a considerable reputation as a progressive theatre. For a time after the Revolution, like the Moscow Art theatre, the theatre of Operetta and the Nezlobina, it stuck to its old policy, that of playing an extensive international repertory. Early in 1919 Korsh began to receive warnings from the Government which led him to produce plays more suited to the public demand. Among them were Shelly's "Cenci," and Romain Rolland's "Danton," two pieces that found much favour with revolutionary audiences. There is another "Danton," by the German writer Büchner, which has never found favour in bolshevist Russia, probably on account of its individualistic tendency. Subsequently the theatre of Korsh passed through a very difficult time and came to exhibit a quasi-revolutionary programme which included the names of Molière, Schiller, Goldoni and Ostrovski. The latter was not a revolutionist. But his satirical attacks on the merchant class of the past century were much appreciated by the toilers. In this way the theatre of Korsh came into line with the Nepman theatres.

(B) THE ERMITAGE GROUP

The Ermitage Group consisted of a block of entertainment buildings and adjoining pleasure gardens, containing cafés, open-air and roofed-in theatres, concert stages, shooting galleries, and all the machinery for light and popular middle-class entertainment. About 1922 the gardens were given up to full bolshevist propaganda as though to counteract the middle-class tendencies of the amusement. The grounds contained colossal blocks of statistics to remind the common folk what the Revolution had presented them with in the way of minerals, metals, and other invaluable natural products from their own land covering an eighth of the surface of the world, and to beseech them to set to work at once to Produce! Produce! Produce! and Create!

Create! Create! Likewise the interior of the buildings were hung with immense banners containing similar exhortations. At which the middle-class laughed while taking their own pleasures gaily, both at the Ermitage and at the little theatres and *café-chantants* elsewhere. The compromise worked, for, not long after, the Ermitage was seen emerging from its long period of neglect and putting on a gay coat of paint and illuminating itself brilliantly with electricity. But its new life was a short one. In the subsequent "cleaning up" of the Nepmen, the Ermitage, the Korsh, the Zemnie and other pseudo-revolutionary theatres—theatres that threw pieces of various past revolutionists, like Robespierre, at their audiences in a way that suited any palate—were put to another use.

During this period of Nepman reaction the New theatre suffered a temporary set-back. The building of it almost stopped. Its leaders made a strong protest against the confusion set up, the proletarians saw the beginnings of reaction against the fundamental postulates of the Revolution. The combined result was that a new and stronger feeling sprang up in favour of firmly establishing the New theatre on the line dictated by the Revolution, by excluding from it the Nepman and reactionaries of any new kind so far as this could be done by refusing to tolerate plays of compromise. This attempt to regain the high road introduced a new phase of the building of the theatre.

PART III

PROCESS C. COMPLETING THE THEATRE—1923-28

FIRST PHASE OF STABILITY

INTELLECTUAL CONDUCT OF THE THEATRE

CHAPTER IX

I. POLICY

A PERIOD of two years succeeding the Revolution, Civil War, Blockade and Black Famine, marked the transition of theatrical affairs in Russia, caused by the New Economic Policy and the revival of individualism.

The commencement of 1924 closed a period unexampled in the number and importance of violent events, and their reflection by the theatre, and opened another period also unexampled in the number and importance of events—but events lacking the violence of their predecessors. It was a period of comparative stability.

The New theatre was about to enter upon another stage of its career. The first stage was one of planning,—the conception and announcement of the plan and a rough realisation of its outline. The second stage was to see the laying down of the foundation, that is, the economic foundation in accordance with the national plan drawn up by Lenin. For this very important task, and to some extent a fateful one, seeing that the New theatre must stand or fall by this partial fulfilment of its function, a few calm years of national reconstruction were required.

Let me repeat that all seriously concerned with the theatre were engaged in a great new (new for recent time) undertaking, the rebuilding of the Russian theatre throughout, save there was no architectural rebuilding. Some might therefore call it a revision of the function, content and method of the theatre. But "revision" is inadequate. Actually this New

196 THE NEW SPIRIT IN THE RUSSIAN THEATRE

theatre, now in a satisfactory stage of rebuilding, marks a revolutionary advance (revolutionary in the sense of function) over anything that has been done in a similar way during the past four hundred years.

In this past five years of advance of a nation undergoing reconstruction, reorganisation, and being improvised on by economic collective necessities, just as in the first five years the Revolution had improvised on it and so fashioned material to be reflected by the humanised theatre, there are many changes to be noted. Compare the theatre to-day with what it was in 1922, and this must be obvious. Compare the political, economic and social situation, and the corresponding changes in theatrical policy, organisation and achievement. Compare the difference between the audience of then and now,—the change of type of visitor. Note how business men and culturists have taken the place of the Hands off Russia representatives of foreign labour delegates and sympathisers and of relief workers, who formed the advance guard of visitors to Russia in its revolutionary and Black famine days. The theatre audience is, alone, evidence of Russia changing.

Note the Master and Lesser Builders of the New theatre. Compare their present manner and appearance with those of former days. Compare their new content, the ideology of bolshevist society, with their content in 1922. Note their changed technique, the rise of constructive-synthesis and the decline (if not disappearance) of æsthetic synthesis. It is evidence of the New theatre advancing.

Compare the position of the common folk (or let us say the proletarians) in 1922 and in 1928. Then complaining of the intrusion of the individualistic shopkeepers and the go-betweens, now firmly behind the theatre and demanding the expulsion of even the foremost radical director if he shows the least sign of reaction. Powerful enough to demand the dismissal of Meierhold, the acknowledged leader of the Left, because they read compromise in his most recent plays.

In its first period the theatre became humanised. In its second, now to be considered, a definite scientific element has been added, the theatre and its achievements may be considered in terms of sociology. It is true that during the first it had a strong sociological side. But during the second it has become wholly sociological. It has been a period of putting practical sociology on the stage. The theatricalised content has been provided not only by current political (home and foreign) events, but by the economic situation and the ideology of society, that is, the new mental coinage set in circulation through the response of millions of people who had accepted the new regime and its radical and scientific and social teachings, for instance, the emancipation of woman and the relations of the sexes, the meaning of self-knowledge and self-control.

It may be asked at this point, what light will the sociologist of the future find in the New theatre on the decay or advance of a power put into the hands of the bolshevists by the Revolution? The best answer is a brief summary of the forces and circumstances operating on the theatre and an examination of the most significant plays which reflect these forces and circumstances. The new influences fall under three main heads: Constructive Nationalism; Economic Reconstruction; and Reconciliation with Foreign Powers, the latter principally for the renewal of trade and commerce. It would take too long to analyse the many and varied themes which these three main subjects offered for treatment in the theatre. There was first of all the renewed class-struggle with the shopkeeper profiteers, the reactionaries and the compromisers or go-betweens, and corrupt agents called forth by the New Economic Policy; (at the same time there were economic advantages that came through the N.E.P.); the wider economic struggle, including the attempt to reconstruct industrial areas as a whole on the basis of large-scale collective production as determined by present-day technical methods; and the all-Russia electrification scheme as conceived by Lenin. Along with this was the proposal to

198 THE NEW SPIRIT IN THE RUSSIAN THEATRE

mechanise agriculture and to socialise the peasant so as to make backward rural areas under the control of the small peasant owner as largely productive as possible. By this means the old comparatively unproductive individualist methods of agriculture were to be replaced by agriculture on collective mechanised lines.

Economic reconstruction and necessities were responsible for change of Government policy both political and economic, and from this change of policy came many changes. There was the thrust towards industrialisation, and mechanisation of agriculture. There was the change of Soviets from a political form to one of economic reconstruction. There was a general settling down to the task of consolidating the whole area known as the U.S.S.R. (the Union Of Soviet Socialist Republics), and thus of building a New Russia. There was the establishment of a co-operative system aiming to bring workers and peasants closer together. There was a change of social policy which introduced a new factory system. The factory became a social institution on the bases of co-operation, ownership, and equality. The change brought forth workmen directors, factory clubs, theatres, cinemas, crèches. In addition it produced new means of enlightenment and communication like the Lenin Corner and wall newspapers. Then there was a change of financial and commercial policy. The Trust in the form of a Government combine arose. Colossal trading centres were established. They were considered as national property. They were not capitalised in the Western European meaning of the term. All profits went to the betterment of the community.

Many foreign events caused changes of public mood which were reflected by the theatre. These will be noted at the commencement of section iv. In the present section theatrical changes and theatricalisation of important events will be traced to the Autumn of 1926, to the close of the English Miners' Strike which set Russia theatricalising the event in every imaginable manner. This was followed by the defeat of the Trotski Opposition Party which was also theatricalised in various ways.

From 1923 to the Summer of 1927 the New theatre enjoyed fairly stable conditions. There were changes of policy, organisation, content and technique dictated by the above-mentioned changes, and, in particular, by the general economic situation. It fell under the influences of the stabilisation, unification and security processes which the country as a whole underwent. It gradually realised an original form of co-operative oneness or socialist unification. First of all it dropped the Centre, leaving the Right and Left to fight for supremacy, and then came together as a whole with the victory of the Left forces.

Thus the theatre brought the function it was to fulfil for the Russian people and an harmonious form to flower. It was bound to do so if it was to achieve what it originally promised to do. Once it was placed in charge of the folk with instructions to exalt it by leading it along the path of self-realisation, liberation and salvation, there was no drawing back save to become an object of universal ridicule. Of course the Russian theatre is only at the entrance to the path of righteousness (the reflection of right thinking and doing), as yet. Whether it will reach the larger and magnificent field of full social activity the nature and number of future events alone can show.

Coming to the changes, there was the change of theatrical policy dictated by the general economic situation. It showed itself in the renewal of the money system. The box-office was reopened, actors were paid in money once more, instead of in kind—food, clothes, boots, etc.—as hitherto. Outstanding individual directors, *i.e.*, Left and Right intellectuals obtained fuller control over their theatres which gradually became operated under a subsidy scheme, and known as "State Academic" theatres. They put on new characteristics in consequence. For instance, the Moscow Art theatre is now called the Moscow Art Academic theatre. A kind of honorary degree was conferred upon leading and deserving directors and actors who thus became Artists of The People. Licences were granted to the smaller establishments, which did not however produce

200 THE NEW SPIRIT IN THE RUSSIAN THEATRE

any serious rivalry between them and the big establishments, because the theatre remained throughout held in trust by the Government for the people, that is, no drastic or reactionary change in any part of it could take place without the consent of the Government acting on behalf of the people. One or two attempts by slack directors to give theatrical representations not in harmony with the collective spirit, not interpreting collective necessities were ruthlessly suppressed. All the playhouses came to have a subject in common to handle, and the only thing each could monopolise was that side of the subject that appealed strongly to the audience that each set out to entertain. Thus the Proletcult theatre took over the factory as its special subject. It put the factory on the stage in its various aspects, but especially as a means of warning young workers against the counter influences that were at work for the purpose of undermining their allegiance to the new regime.

This specialisation of the Russian playhouses recalled that of the English playhouses before the war. In the latter case theatres were known by the form of entertainment they gave,—farce, comedy, domestic drama, melodrama and so on. In the former theatres were divided up according to the divisions of a general content.

The change of Government policy in regard to political, economic, cultural-education and social matters, brought about by stability, scientific progress, experiment, Russia back in Europe, New Economic Policy and unforeseen forces, circumstances and events, provided fresh themes for the theatre—themes that reflected the changing experiences of the people. The engineering shop, the factory, the village soviet, the mammoth Trust as it affected the lives and activities of the people, the fear and hope of the N.E.P.; these and unfamiliar realistic symbols of the new system of life took the stage.

It was this systematic theatrical representation of the outside world that led gradually to the unification of the theatres under the pressure of the proletarians, as will be shown presently.

Thus a curious situation came to arise. The very capable intellectuals who had been actively engaged doing the ground work and securing the use of the theatre to the common folk found themselves succeeded in the control of the theatre by something called "The Will of the People" meaning direction by the common folk, confirming and fully establishing this folk in the monopoly of popular entertainment. If a play did not please then the voice of the Mass raised in protest, through their representatives, was heard.

Still the Master Builders remained at their posts, though of late more than one has learned what it is to come under the censure of the "Will of the People." During the first period of the New theatre the intellectuals imposed their own wills on the theatre. By their zeal, courage and continuous experiment they mainly fashioned the New theatre to live and think for the common folk. They did for the new owners what they were unable to do for themselves. In this important task they were aided by the new bolshevist intellectuals, and the Mass they represented. Pletnev, the working man director and intellectual, for instance, governed the Proletcult theatre and its widespread affiliations. During the first stage of the period of stability they kept their position. Their concern at that time was to express the ideology of soviet society.

2. ORGANISATION

The Changes of theatrical organisation followed on the lines of political policy. The latter was concerned with the establishment of a unified, self-centred and self-determined Russia. To put it plainly, the Government's first aim was to consolidate the bolshevist State, to bring its scattered parts, that is soviets, together, and to discipline and organise these parts so that every decision could be communicated to the centre, and hence recommunicated to every constituent part. A policy such as this dictated by war, and a policy dictated by peace, though they both have one end in giving exclusive privileges to the

common folk as owners of a country to be held in trust and administered on their behalf, are bound to exhibit differences in organisation as new forces and circumstances make themselves felt.

Hence changes made themselves felt in the theatre which rested on Government policy as determined by the collective necessities of the folk. The soviets which had gained a foothold in the theatre, where they exercised control, were gradually replaced by national or State academic theatre organisations. Even Meierhold the acknowledged leader of the insurgent Left (the Russian intellectuals and proletarians who were insurgent so far as bolshevist Russia was concerned) dropped the theatre soviet. The soviet in giving place to State organisation had less and less to say in the administration of the theatre. Directors were freer in their choice of plays, though, at the same time they continued under the control of a Centre Theatre Committee appointed by the Government and consisting of Government and theatrical representatives. Trotski was included at one time. In short, the theatrical soviet gradually ceased to function in the theatre except here and there where they were little more than the tail end of executive committees.

CHAPTER X

THE MASTER BUILDERS

THEIR NEW MATERIALS

THE Big Five Builders then predominated for a time. By predominating is meant that they were not controlled wholly by public opinion (or the Will of the People, as some call it). They exhibited change in appearance, in subject and method. As the period of spilling blood, of heated discussion and frenzy receded, they assumed a cooler manner, their playhouses were instrumental to decorum, they themselves were not so disconcerted by the noisy and strange behaviour of the Mass. The audience became less exuberant, and ceased to disfigure the auditorium of the private theatre. The matter of personal appearance and business habits began to occupy the attention of the big directors again. With improved economic conditions, and with the audience casting off the worst effects of the early days of the change over, they put on flesh and a change of clothes, and commanded more interest than when they were lost among the crowd. I can remember Meierhold looking, in the first period, like a typical workman in blouse, top boots and cap, dining on black bread and hard-boiled eggs, living in a bare, cold and cheerless flat, and yet doing work that might reasonably cause English theatre managers to give up their jobs and take to road-sweeping. I remember too calling on Lunacharski at a time when he was entombed in the Kremlin. He was attired like a typical working-class representative and had the manner of a builder's foreman. Then there was Stanislavski in distress, or so he said, because he was wearing fashionable trousers that were

like a looking glass with nice fringe trimmings. He was equally unhappy about the state of his rehearsal studio, and the mental state of his audience. These three men are a curious reflection of improving conditions and to-day, together seem clearly to say that things in Russia are not so bad. Meierhold's clothes and housing and food have changed for the better. Lunacharski is installed in palatial offices outside the Kremlin. He has the suavity of the man of culture, the appearance of a prominent member of the Government and sometimes he wears a top hat. Stanislavski is comfortable-looking once more. He has been to America and he wears distinguished (American) garments, and he possesses a baby motor car. Gone are the days when his company had to tramp miles through the snow and darkness with almost bare feet, and sometimes with bare innards also.

Likewise there have been changes in the ranks of the Lesser Builders. Some significant directors, like Foregger and Pletnev have dropped out. New ones have taken their place. Little radical theatres of experiment have closed; others have opened, like the Vakhtangov theatre, the theatre of Satire, etc. The Moscow Art theatre studios have undergone changes, they have separated from the parent theatre. The Labour theatrical organisations, which at the time of the Revolution were exceedingly numerous, and between 1918 and 1920 came to number thousands, have concentrated to form big Labour theatres, like the New Dramatic theatre, the Trades Union theatre, the theatre of Revolution (a theatre once under Meierhold's control which came to specialise on labour problems) and so on, each specialising on a broad question of labour policy and organisation, as already pointed out. Further the 1923-28 period has seen the birth of uncompromising young bolshevist theatrical organisations, like the Tram, and the Blue Blouse or Living Newspaper players.

1. SUBJECT

The extension to the intellectuals of the privilege of exercising power (so far as it could be exercised under the soviet system of theatrical organisation) was due largely to the subject to be expressed. During the first period the subject was sociologically speaking contemporary social revolution, the revolution improvising on the Mass and the theatre reflecting the improvisation. During the succeeding period the subject was, sociologically speaking, contemporary social evolution, the prevailing ideas of economic reconstruction and construction improvising on the folk and their necessities, housing, food, clothing, transport, and sport and creating themes to be reflected by the theatre. In reflecting this change the Builders were chiefly concerned with replacing the symbols and ideas used to express individualist power, by others expressing collective power.

2. MATERIALISTIC IDEOLOGY

It is necessary here to analyse the ideas, which the New theatre was called upon to reflect, produced by a state of mind which had its own character, character that is evolved by extraordinary and unaccustomed forces and circumstances experienced during the overthrow of one social order and the establishment of another. The whole point of this book is that the New theatre affords the best study to be found of the restoration of vital function and its accompanying sociological expression to the Theatre. Unless its thesis is supported by the exhibition of the functional ideas themselves, the book loses its chief value. The new ideology which superseded the old one is an ideology expressed by thought and action determined by the Marx-Lenin materialistic basis of society. It is composed of the following ingredients :—

A New Philosophy :

Materialistic causality.

A New Faith :

Faith in Bolshevism to exalt the common Man and to realise a Labour Heaven on Earth.

A New Psychology :

Mindlessness; a new muscular perception in place of mental, that is, elimination of the "soul" and "mind." Associated with this is Pavlov's reflexology. Behaviourism is concerned with cutting out mind but it is not psychology. Freud was rejected by the Russian authorities at first, but they see something in him to-day.

A New Ethic :

Mass action, good; individualistic action, bad.

A New Æsthetic :

Beauty of co-operative service and advertisement.

A New Political Ideal :

Government by association.

A New Economic :

Energy economic in place of money economics :—

Control of energy.

Production of energy.

Conservation of energy.

Utilisation of energy.

A New Social Culture :

Production of best cities and best stock : *i.e.*, Civics and Eugenics.

Mastery of self and environment as a social duty.

Self-realisation and self-expression as a social duty.

A New Technique :

The science of interpretation called into existence by the new ideology.

New Mechanics :

Engineering, Architectural Engineering and Machine

forms and movements conceived of as a means to enable the new social organisation to get itself fulfilled, by the creation of new dynamic forms that inspire, exalt, educate and discipline human beings. In short by acting as a powerful formative influence.

Bio-mechanics :

Physical culture and training.

New psychology of movement.

Industrial psychology and elimination of waste.

Behaviourism applied to the theatre. Muscular thought and speech, *i.e.*, thinking and doing by action, as in the circus.

New Cinematography :

Cinema speed, variety and movement transferred to the stage.

This is part of the bolshevist practical sociology whose ideas filtered through the theatre and its plays and technique. It shows that the theatre and the common folk were undergoing developments which economised as well as enriched their resources. It is evident they were following the direction set by Lenin's pyramidal plan with its fixed materialist ideas.

3. ILLUSTRATIONS

An analysis of the plays of the period shows that the general sociological subject fell into three main divisions:—

1. The best and worst of the old social life, *i.e.*, the victories and losses in the class-struggle.
2. Exaggerations of the new social life:

Soviet social comedy.

The toilers criticise the intellectuals and the bureaucracy and point out dangers to the young working-folk.

3. The best side of the new social life :

The theatre enters into all questions of building the new nation and the new citizen.

4. EXECUTION

As though for the purpose of dealing with these big and novel features the theatres became divided off as described, whether automatically or not is not clear. But it is certain that theatres under the Big Five continued their development and exhibited the influence of the aforementioned changes of policy, organisation, content and form. At this point the story of the Five may be resumed.

CHAPTER XI

MASTER BUILDERS: PLAYS AND TECHNIQUE

A. MEIERHOLD—1924-8

A SUMMARY of Meierhold's developments during the first period of the building of the New theatre will show the point he had reached when new conditions were arising which were to introduce a phase of transition as an interlude to the most significant period—the new practical sociological one. This does not mean that the first period was without its important sociological side. On the contrary the outline that was first of all sketched in, and the commencement of the building, were on distinctly sociological lines. All but the State theatres had gradually repudiated the legitimate form of drama of pre-revolution days; improvised spectacles and mass plays seemed better suited to the new audience. Especially did the Revolution bring with it a type of entertainment which ever since has gained a stronger and stronger hold upon the common folk, and has succeeded in replacing the older one. The subject of the new species of plays was the theatricalisation of the improvisation by the Revolution on the Russian folk, just as that of the plays after 1922 were the theatricalisation of the improvisation of reconstruction on the folk and their environment. This new species was heroic tragedy and melodrama, and other forms of drama that represented the modifications and variations of these.

The sociological change which commenced with the first period may be indicated by an analysis of the sociology in Meierhold's plays:

1. Life-centred concept of the theatre. The theatre and the

people as one. The theatrical Prometheus steals fire not from Heaven but from Earth.

2. Passes from the old religious tendency to the new. Faith in bolshevism. Repudiates the soul and mysticism and subjectivism and accepts the Mass-man and objectivism. Brings the questions of Death and Birth into a new temple—the theatre of Mass-man which becomes a temple of initiation into bolshevist realities. Further converts the temple into a playground for the folk.

3. Social tendency. Deals with marriage and sex themes, but not as problems.

4. The Classic tendency. The imitation of human actions with reference to a definite plan, an earthly one.

5. The heroic-romantic tendency. The representation of revolutionary spectacles in great squares and other open spaces, and in the theatre converted wholly into stage space for the purpose.

6. Scientific tendency. Sets Labour playing with its tools in the theatre. Empties the stage leaving only space and bare walls, erects engineer's and builder's constructions resembling parts of machinery, tools and architectural erections. Applies the principles of bio-mechanics.

During the transitional period he was concerned with the liberated mechanic-actor playing with his machine of representation instead of the machine playing with and obliterating him, as on the conventional stage. It was a contribution towards the solution of the problem of the mastery of the machine.

After the transition marked by the New Economic Policy he extended his sociological outlook. He took up the new class-war evoked by the N.E.P. and the intriguing enemies within the Republic, and dealt with social and scientific developments.

1922-23, was a season of jubilee. In this season Meierhold celebrated his twenty-fifth anniversary as a theatrical director.



A. M. GRANOVSKI

The talented founder, organiser and director of the New Yiddish theatre, the Moscow State Jewish Theatre. His productions are wholly Jewish. By their remarkable, original qualities they have won for his theatre State recognition besides providing proof of the fine intellectual and æsthetic qualities of the Jewish men of the theatre at their best.

He received the title of Artist of the People and his theatre was called the T.I.M., or theatre of Meierhold.

1923-4. Took part in an Ostrovski celebration. Ostrovski is held by the bolshevists to be the best pre-revolution comedy writer, and the one most fitted to express to the new audience the evils of the old regime. His works are not only frequently played but widely studied in the bolshevist schools. Meierhold's participation in the Ostrovski celebration meant that he was taking up his new position after the N.E.P. transitional period. It looked as though he had conceived the idea of meeting the growing demand of an increasing working-class audience for answers to its social questions, by dropping the monumental heroic spectacle. Ostrovski's plays were, as already indicated, eminently suited to enable him to make a start at the execution of his social plan. Though the author describes the period prior to 1861, *i.e.*, prior to Alexander II's reforms, his works, apart from their historical interest, are important for present-day bolshevist purpose. They present true pictures of their time, especially of the peasantry and the new commercial rich, exposing the bigotry, narrowness and hypocrisy of the latter in an unsparing fashion.

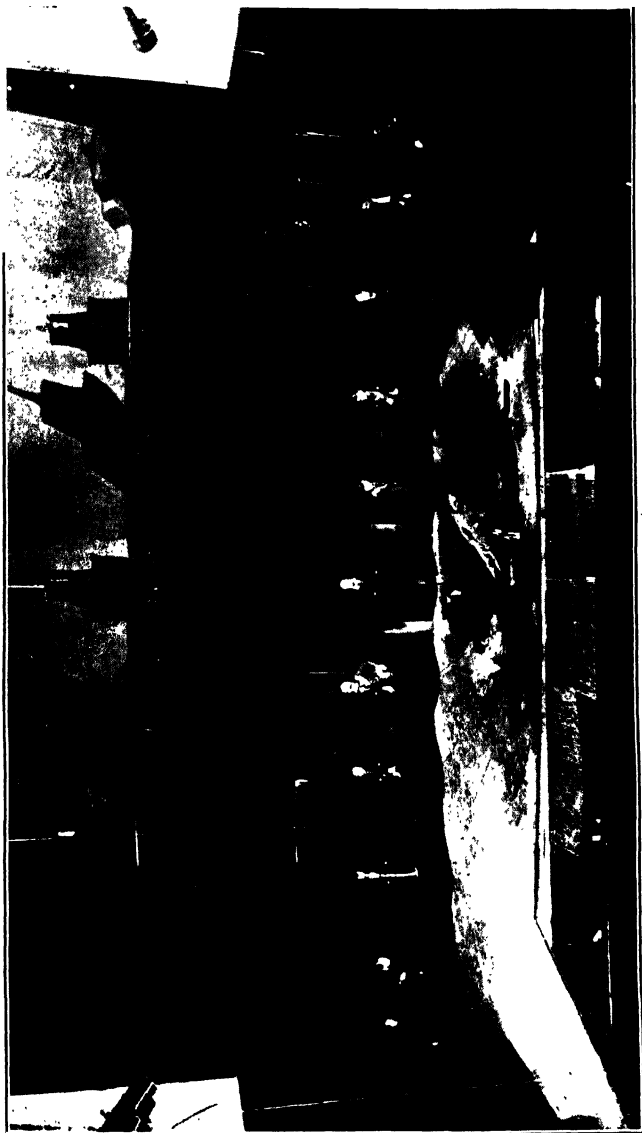
1923. "THE FOREST." With this piece Meierhold began to lay the new economic foundation of the theatrical structure. It is a biting social satire. It has no principal characters, scarcely any plot. It is set in a transitional time when the commercial class is beginning to emerge. The latter is shown to be a money-grabbing, impious phenomenon, robbing others and praying to God. The play reveals also the status of the actor and makes great fun out of the doings of a half-crazy tragedian, and a Sancho Panza of a comedian, his companion. The two wander about "living like wolves in the forest" as someone observes, because actors were then treated with contempt. This prejudice leads the tragedian to pass himself off on his aunt as a colonel, and his companion as his servant.

As produced by Meierhold it was a comedy of escape—

expressing those conditions from which bolshevism had enabled the new population to escape. The production of this classic showed a further search for new things. There was a change in the scenery. Though, like all the models, it followed the main lines of a construction, it was of a character to which the name new realism was given. The play was broken up into thirty-three episodes, and the "construction" was broken up into a number of little settings suited to the rapid and continuous performance of the episodes. The stage and its spaces resembled the interior of a kinema studio, and the whole thing suggested a first attempt at transferring cinematographic movement, variety and speed to the stage. And there was a Japanese influence in the bridges and paths.

1923. "THE LAKE OF LYULL." His second production also showed him concerned with his new departure. The aim of the play was to warn against political treachery. It also introduced the New Woman. A revolutionist wishing to be in a position to assert his own will over his fellow men joins the capitalist class. He rises stage by stage till he occupies a very important individualist position little knowing that he has become hopelessly enslaved by the class that helped him to rise. In the end he overreaches himself and dies by the hand of a woman who is opposed to his contemptible behaviour. The motive of a woman converted to bolshevism acting as bolshevist nemesis is a fairly frequent and popular one. In fact an important part taken by the New Woman on the stage seems to be that of exterminator of the men who go white and betray the reds. Also to be exalted by male treachery.

1923. "THE DESTRUCTION OF EUROPE" ("D.E."). A third production during this season seemed to carry Meierhold's scheme of cinematography much further. The play, "The Destruction of Europe," was made by Meierhold himself from a German novel, "Trust for the Destruction of Europe," by I. Ehrenburg. It is a fantastic study in comparative sociological expression. It compares the facts of human life—facts



"REVIZOR"

The revised version of Gogol's play at Meierhold's theatre. This play caused a great uproar. Meierhold was accused of mutilating the classics, and deserting his legitimate field. It led to Meierhold's absence for a time from Moscow. The setting is a wide semi-circular panel containing twelve double doors through which characters enter and

selected and arranged by novelists and playwrights—of Western European capitalist business and pleasure scenes with the scenes of bolshevist ordered and highly-disciplined social life. The financial scoops, and the club orgies, of capitalist society are contrasted with, for instance, a bolshevist gymnasium in which bio-mechanics are being fully applied. For this spectacle Meierhold invented a system of moving walls. These moved with the actors and intensified the dynamic system.

1924-25. Meierhold continued a practice which he had commenced three or four seasons before. He opened the season with a performance of the pieces in his new repertory, beginning with "The Magnificent Cuckold" and concluding with the latest production, which now was "D.E." In the present season he produced two very important plays which marked a considerable change of policy, content and technique, and which may have been a cause of the fierce storm that later gathered round him. He had always been the centre of a storm owing to his boldness and extreme unconventionality. But now both parties, his foes and his friends, united against him. The one, the classicists, bullied him for mutilating and adapting master-pieces; the other, the radicals, accused him of casting out the new spirit of the theatre. The two plays, or experiments, which may have been evidence against him when trouble arose in 1928, were "Bubus" ("Teacher Bubus"), a comedy with music, by A. Faiko, and "Mandate," a comedy in three acts, by Nicholas Erdman, a brilliant production in the neo-realistic manner. In these plays as well as in Gogol's "Revizor," an up-to-date version of Gogol's comedy, produced later, Meierhold was seen turning definitely to bolshevist comedy and deserting the form of bolshevist tragedy on which he had specialised. The scenery was changed in harmony with the plays. The earlier vertical construction was swept away. It was replaced in "Mandate" by a flat revolving stage divided into concentric rings capable of containing furniture, etc., which moved on and off, passing through the openings provided by moving walls

forming the background and sides of the setting. The aim of this method of staging seemed to be to obtain a far more fluid stage than he had used, by which the maximum degree of simplicity, concentration, speed and variety could be got with the minimum means. Further, it was a stage best suited to a species of play necessary to reflect the new and rushing stream of human life with its brighter tendencies. There were plays, too, intended to make war on the worst elements of the new bolshevist society; just as the best of the mid-nineteenth Russian writers criticised and made war on the changes and follies of the society of their day.

Faiko was one of a group of compromisers, or go-betweens, which included Romansev, Smolen, Volkenstein and Bulgakov. They maintained the middle-class tradition and introduced it to their plays, but in such a cunning way that no one was sure whether the plays were pro- or anti-bolshevist. The result was that the old regimists were flattered and the new ones were puzzled. The first two or three performances of each of their plays caused great trouble, and set the Press overflowing with wild discussion.

1925. "BUBUS." The theme of "Bubus" was that of a weak-willed young intellectual who talked incessantly, wavered and did nothing. In the end a detachment of armed workers and soldiers break into the house of rich people and the curtain falls on the arrest of Bubus. One of the novelties of the production was musical extracts taken from composers who would hardly seem to be in harmony with a bolshevist comedy. In the first act there were 7 Chopin numbers and 6 Liszt; in the second, 7 Chopin and 6 Liszt and 1 Schumann; in the third, 8 Chopin and 7 Liszt. There were two classical dances and jazz band selections from a repertory including "Rose of Brazil," "O Nile," "Buddha," "Dancing of the Honeymoon," and "Dardanella." The whole production partook of the character of a new spectacle. Another novelty was music played on bamboo rods, an idea derived from the Japanese.

1925. "MANDATE." In "Mandate," the succeeding production—a safety-first play, which showed the spectator how the old ruling class tried to protect themselves by an ingenious alliance with the new one, just as many well-to-do persons in England, at the time of the Revolution, made an alliance with Labour because Labour seemed likely to become a ruling class—one saw a development of the important change in Meierhold's theatrical and social outlook. It was a "literary" play vigorously reflecting contemporary human life. The big construction and machinery of the early period were replaced by the flat stage revolving in full view of the audience. The old structural analysis had yielded to a new analysis made by the use of the stage divided into circles, each revolving separately, and moving walls or screens. The setting consisted of a large light cedarwood wall up stage. This wall was divided into three or four moving partitions. Left and Right were similar divided walls. The furniture moved about like, and with the actors. It was acting furniture. For instance, take scene 2. The stage is empty. The screens up back open. An armchair enters, followed by a velvet stool and a small graceful pedestal. These cross the stage, actorwise. Then enters a large trunk with a woman seated on it. The accessories meet and make a design. They are essential accessories for two women. Here is the essence of economy and concentration. In one scene there was only a couch. It was an essential actor in a piece of comedy. It concealed the players, it enabled them to do their business in many ways. It took part in the action as much as the players did. Such simplicity, swift-working, and concentration was demanded by an action play which was full of plotting and changes. There was the typical middle-class family of to-day hating the bolshevists. In order to protect themselves from the bolshevists they assumed the appearance of working-class people. They were simply illustrating the prevalent belief that it was safer to know the bolshevists than to shun them. There was the aristocratic family who shared the middle-class accommoda-

tion and fear. There is the timid young man who is anxious to get a mandate in order to frighten everybody. The mandate during the Revolution was a document that enabled the holder to do as he liked, even arrest people. He obtains a mandate with which he terrifies everybody till it is discovered that it is an ordinary certificate of the housing committee (a committee formed by the tenants of the house where the two families lived) which the young man had written himself. This plot dealt with several sociological points, one of them being the housing shortage by which means the characters were brought together.

1926. "ROAR, CHINA!" "Mandate" was a big success and ran for a considerable period. It looked as though Meierhold was working towards a new comedy of manners with which he could travel abroad and give countries outside Russia a taste of his genius. But whether because of outside pressure or because of his own perversity and enthusiasm which led him from experiment to experiment, he suddenly became serious and plunged into foreign politics again. He found a success even greater than "Mandate" in a theme indicting England for interfering with China at a moment when there was great unrest in that country pointing to an outcome in revolution. The play embodying this theme was called "Roar, China!" It was written and produced, under the direction of Meierhold, by one of his pupils, S. Tretiakov, who had spent some time in China, and it was based on an actual event of which Tretiakov had had first-hand experience. This event was one in which the British gunboat "Cockchafer" took part while stationed on the Yangtze river.

The production, owing to its topical and daring subject, the unconventionality of its staging and the mixed character of its actors, aroused much curiosity. It became the leading show piece of Moscow to which every visitor who devoutly believed in the principles of the New Russia went to pay homage; Labour delegates from all parts of the world went to see it as a supreme duty; and visitors moved rather by curiosity than any

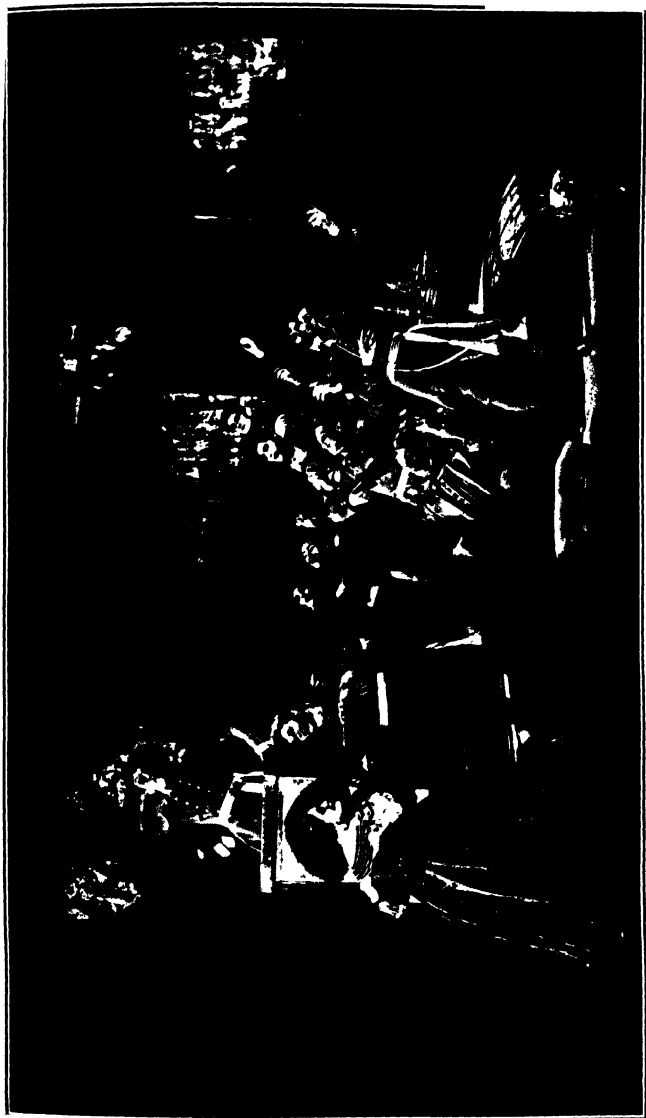
particular sympathy went to wonder at it, because they were told that was the fashion. Opinions on the nature and value of the play and performance were extremely different and varied. For instance, Mr. Basil Dean, the London producer, suggested that it was the blight of the world. "It was a piece of vicious propaganda against England and America" (or the world as it is composed to-day). Further it was "a curious mixture of rubbishy propaganda and good old-fashioned melodrama." Mr. Dean related that he swam in tea the whole time he was at Moscow, so what can you expect? On the other hand, to Miss Velona Pilcher, who was associated with the Gate theatre, London, it was the light of the world, which "Comrade Tretiakov and Comrade Meierhold" had kindled between them. But whether for or against it, everyone seemed to judge it as a piece of sheer realism. What struck me most was its instructive symbolism.

Consciously or unconsciously, Meierhold had in "Roar, China!" made a considerable contribution to the Society of "Hands off China" in a form of his own. The stage and setting did not have merely the technical meaning attached to it by Mr. Dean, whose description appeared in the "Daily Telegraph." "At the back of the stage is a vast girder mast, a familiar sight on United States battleships, with a section of what purports to be the upper works of a British gunboat, 'The Cockchafer.' At certain moments in the action this contrivance is made to advance upon the audience and to swing the muzzles of two large guns upon them with menacing effect. In front of this is a tank of real water, and, nearest the audience, platforms and steps, occupying the place of the usual footlights, provide the space for the incidents on shore." All that is simply the scene and property plots for the guidance of the stage carpenter and property man. Miss Pilcher's impression also leaned strongly towards the theatrical technical manner, with the difference that her description was a *pæan*. "And then that ship!" she exclaims, we can imagine with what look of ecstasy, "What a

thing to study while we wait!" (for the curtain to rise.) "On the farthest third of the spacious stage" (or simply, up stage), "is built the abstract of a gunboat, a construction of decks and turrets and cannon—such a stage ship as the Japanese, in an old Kabuki play I have read of, must have built." In my own diary I have made a note which says, "The setting is a pre-Bubus construction in the form of the profile of the English gunboat 'Cockchafer,' mounted on a revolving stage, mainly to give two large guns the appearance of swinging on their pivots." Miss Pilcher's emotionalised description ran into a column or so of print in the "Manchester Guardian." So I will not pursue it.

My impression, of which I made notes, was of a stage set for two contrasted scenes. The one in the foreground was commercial England, represented by piles of goods; the other was China, represented by a Chinese canoe. Between the two was water, and over the water guns, suggesting the destruction of the barrier, *i.e.*, the water. The action passed from side to side, sometimes on the Chinese quay where the canoe belonged, sometimes on the English ship containing the guns. The actors were Chinese coolies, poor students, Chinese entertainers and folk, English officers, sailors, missionaries, fashionable English folk, business men, and the rest. Thus there were many contrasts. An American was drowned accidentally. The English captain demanded Chinese blood and got it. The play was, in short, a picture of exploitation as the bolsheviks see it. The Chinese were represented as carrying a burden. But the burden was not thrown off. China must not roar yet. There were abundant symbols and emblems, the most moving being the suicide of the Chinese cabin boy outside the captain's door. The boy represented the Chinese spirit of non-resistance; the captain the spirit of aggression.

1927. "REVIZOR." Meierhold's theatre had, from the first, been the centre which visitors to Russia, who wished to see the more stirring side of Russian affairs theatricalised, visited. Also



“REVIZOR”

Meierhold's interpretation of the classic comedy. Another scene showing his alleged “reactionary” tendency. It is a scene of the application of the principles of physical culture which

it had been continuously in hot water on account of the daring unconventionality of its exhibitions. Every production raised a controversy. Towards 1926 the controversies became more and more acute and bitter. There was a suspicion that this great producer was deserting his chosen, and to the extremists, proper path. "Roar, China!" was his last step along that path. Following came productions that showed him attempting to break away from what his admirers considered his legal right, the monopoly of genuine spectacular tragedy, and powerful melodramatic satire. He turned to Gogol for a subject which he could recast and found one in the classic, "Revizor," and another in Griboyedov's "Bitterness from Wisdom." "Revizor" (or "The Government Inspector," as it is known in England) has been frequently performed out of Russia. The theme is the impostor one based upon a case of mistaken identity, used to expose the local government as understood by the Russian authorities one hundred years ago. This theme has been very popular with the new audience, and has accordingly appeared in Gogol's own version or in revised present-day versions. Meierhold's version was so revised that its production caused an uproar, and many newspaper articles and pamphlets were written for and against it.

The original version was an entertaining satire on bureaucratic conditions as Gogol actually experienced them. It was a picture of his time. There was the group of local officials waiting in fear of the expected arrival of the Revizor from St. Petersburg. There was the young man who they mistook for the Revizor, and at whose feet they laid their sins hoping to pass them off as the local authorities'. On the whole they were a sordid gang. Meierhold entirely altered the atmosphere of the piece. He made it a fairly serious comedy and gave the characters those pathological features which, in his belief, would be found in a group of corrupt local authorities of to-day. The Revizor was a much bigger, more universal, man than Gogol made him. Most of the characters exhibited pathological

symptoms. There was one scene, the third, in which the eight characters looked like patients in a hospital for diseases of the nervous system. Klestakov, the Revizor, as played by Garin, was a weak-looking young man wearing horn-rimmed spectacles. The principal woman, Anna Andreevna, was brilliantly played by Meierhold's wife, Zénaïde Reich. The play was broken into fifteen scenes, and settings of a constructive-naturalistic kind were used to obtain the necessary speed and variety. The outstanding feature of the setting was the big semi-circular moving wall used in the fourteenth scene. It contained twelve doors through which spying heads were thrust and by means of which characters drifted on and off to form innumerable ensembles and designs.

Whether or not Meierhold chose the next piece in order to reflect what he felt about the manner in which he was being treated, there is no doubt that it was suited for the purpose. Griboyedov's "Bitterness from Wisdom" (the first word has been translated as "sorrow," "grief," "thought," and in various other ways), does reflect the feeling of a man of sense who has tried throughout to raise interpretation and representation to the highest point of significance always in the face of opposition that might reasonably have made him bitter. The theme of the play is that of a man who returns to Moscow after gathering knowledge and wisdom abroad. The latter shows him the rotten and old-fashioned state of society. Like Dr. Stockmann in "An Enemy of Society," he undertakes the self-imposed task of putting the social house in order. But his sometime betrothed spreads a rumour that he is insane. It is seized upon by everybody as an excuse to shun him. As a result the reformer gives up his task as hopeless and leaves Moscow with bitterness in his heart. His wisdom has brought him gall. Meierhold, following his usual custom, recast the play and made it an up-to-date satirical study of civics, that is, of a man with a new conception of social surroundings, meeting with opposition on every side.

Later, Meierhold became re-fascinated by an old interest, the Japanese theatre. In his book, "On the Theatre," written in 1912, it appeared that the Japanese technique was exercising an influence on him. Later he explained to his students the meaning of the Japanese stage and technique. From time to time since he has shown in his spectacles and plays that he has continued strongly under the influence of Japanese technique. There was, for instance, the symbolic bridge in "The Forest," so capable of helping to interpret different human thought and action—the buffoons, the man fishing, the two lovers, unity yet separation—the bridge of Life and Death that forms the chief construction on the Japanese stage. Then there was the equally transforming flower path, which gives a new meaning to everything the actor does—the path that has, within recent years, become vulgarised and been made repulsive by its gross misuse in Western European and American theatres and music halls. It has been said that Meierhold derived the idea of music played on bamboo rods in "Bubus" from Japanese sources.

1926-28. CHINA AND JAPAN. Within the past year or two there has been a big growth of relations between Russia and China and Japan, especially cultural relations. Both Chinese and Japanese companies and plays have appeared in Moscow. In 1926 the Chinese melodrama "Chang-Hai-Tang" (The Chalk Circle) was first performed at the Moscow Dramatic theatre. This play has been produced in London by Mr. Basil Dean who used a translation by Mr. James Laver of Klabund's Westernised version. One of the events of 1928 was the visit of the "Kabuki Theatre" to Moscow. Some significance was attached to the fact that this was the first time in its three hundred years' existence that the famous theatre had left Japan, and that it had chosen to make its bow to the outside world at Moscow. Naturally, Meierhold was intensely interested in the visit of these illustrious foreigners, and showed it by proposing to take his own company to Japan so that it might demonstrate how the Meierhold theatre had utilised Japanese ideas. But nothing has come of the proposal,

as yet. The world outside Russia has yet to see examples of the astonishing constructive-mechanistic, constructive-naturalistic, and constructive-symbolistic methods of the Moscow author-producer. At the moment he is under a cloud of disapprobation caused by the large expenditure on productions to which he has committed the Government, and by his failure to please everybody, although bent upon helping to solve the problems of collective necessities of the new epoch so far as he can do so through the medium of his theatre. After resting in Paris, with the threat that his company shall be disbanded hanging over his head, but reassured by the big protest made by his numerous friends in Moscow and Leningrad against any action of the kind, he has returned to Russia to resume his activities. It is uncertain as yet what path he will take. There was a proposal that he should take charge of the Tram theatre and start afresh with the young people, like Stockmann in "An Enemy of Society." But apparently the outcry against his change from a strict revolutionary policy to that of "tailoring" classics has died down. He has returned to his own theatre with a production that has restored him to proletarian favour again. Two latter-day productions have to be recorded.

1928. "A WINDOW IN THE COUNTRY." It presents a picture of revitalised country life in which Meierhold's bio-mechanics play a prominent part. It is written by a peasant author Rodiona Akulschin.

1929. "THE BUG." (Klop.) A play by Maiakovski the bolshevist poet with whom Meierhold started in the revolutionary theatre business. Sociologically, it is a play of science, conversion and prophecy. It prophesies what the New Russia will be like fifty years hence. What changes science will bring, as illustrated by a reactionary and a bug who are mummified, the one to be resurrected and converted in 1979, the other to be a source of wonder to people who have been relieved of it by science. The whole play is an illustration of the almost hysterical worship of science in present-day Russia.

B. TAIROV. 1923-28.

The continuation of the story of the four other remarkable men engaged in a great new undertaking, that of making the theatre take part in the task of rebuilding Russia and its folk, is the story of their gradual approach to Meierhold, and their acceptance of the Left view of the theatricalisation of social life. For a short time after 1923 there was only a slight sign of this change as each abandoned his particular point of view and took up the general one, that the theatre must express the big immediate problems of the moment. That, in fact, it must become life-centred throughout.

It was during this period of change that the content of the New theatre became definitely sociological. During the first period of the building of the theatre Tairov had been concerned with philosophy, classicism, and sociology expressed by means of art. That is with the idea that all interpretation and representation had an art value. But as his recognition of public demand grew his expression of sociology became more robust and practical as the following summary shows:

First Period of Chaos, 1917-23:

Religion or Faith an assertion of the Eastern belief in the reality of Art.

Eastern Mysticism. "Sakuntala" and its stage setting and Eastern rites.

Latter day Mysticism. Claudel's "The Tidings Brought to Mary."

Classic and Romantic plays and subjects. "Phœdre," "Salome," "Romeo and Juliet," treated to reflect the dynamism, the passion, the emotion and thought associated with a new concept of human life. All this was an abstract of the line taken by the concrete Left, the line Tairov took when he became definitely concrete and produced Eugene O'Neill's "Desire Under

the Elms" as the up-to-date version of "Romeo and Juliet."

Second Period of Order:

Philosophy of collectivism, "The Man Who Was Thursday."

Socialism, O'Neill's "Hairy Ape."

Politics, Revolutionary tendencies, "Rosita."

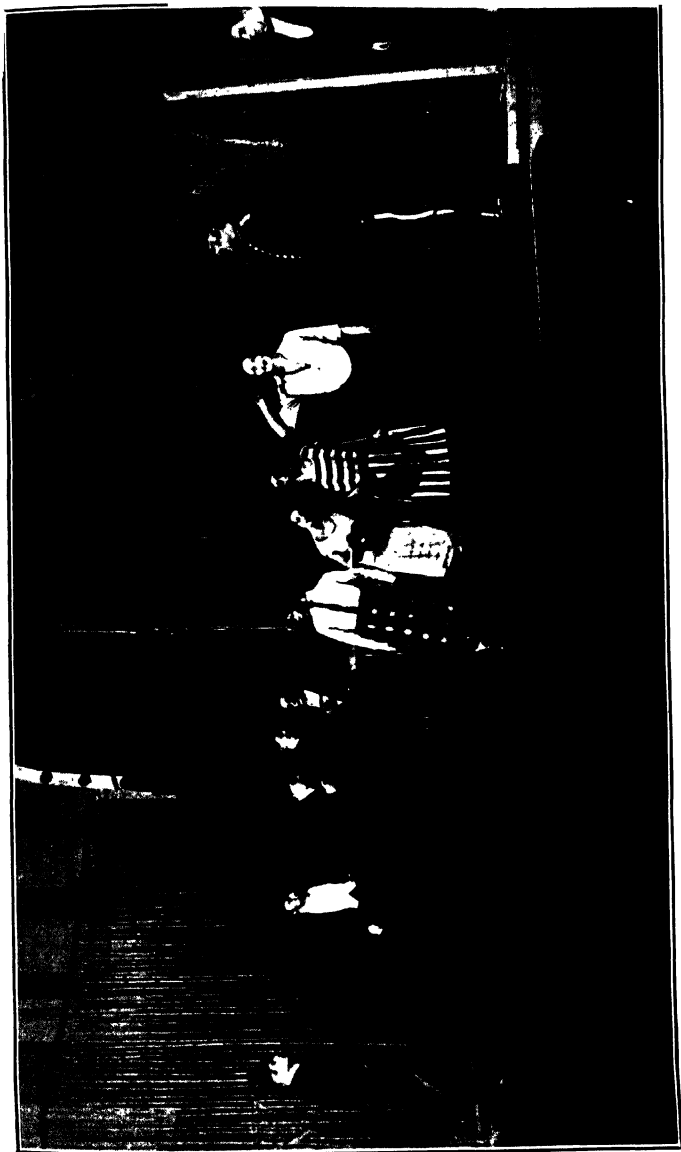
Sex relations. "Desire Under the Elms."

Civics. Experiments in Urbanism, etc.

In this period he turned towards the expression of materialistic philosophy, socialist economics and social relations. His technique changed from æsthetic-synthesis to constructive-synthesis. Like Meierhold he became pre-occupied with engineering, mechanics, urbanism and concrete realism, that is the realism of an objective world, the objects and agents of which he however united by rhythmic harmony.

The description of the content and form of a few plays taken in chronological order will serve to illustrate how Tairov came to accept human life in the bulk as the concrete reality for the theatre to express.

1923. It was shown that, in the first period, Tairov's path was a classical romantic one, a path of adventure amongst tragedy, religion, mysticism, fantasy, not imitative or objective, but original and subjective, with forms in harmony, abstract for mystical themes, and more concrete for less subjective themes. Then came the New Economic Policy period of transition. It was followed by one of comparative Order, and Tairov took the path of definite social cultural evolution. This change of path is best described in his own words, taken from his "house" magazine, or Weekly Review and programme, "7 Days," of which only a few numbers were published. To-day they are not to be obtained. This publication, by the way, was similar in character to others that have been issued, for a short time, by two or three of the most important playhouses in Moscow and Leningrad. Meierhold published a few numbers of a "house"



“TEACHER BUBUS”

The setting provides another example of Meierhold's break with the big stationary "construction," and his search for a more dynamic and mobile stage environment. The set is composed of musical bamboo rods similar to

journal named after his theatre, "Poster T.I.M." These little publications were very important indeed, for they contained serious analyses of theatre productions seen from every point, and written by the directors and the very best authorities they could find. They made one thoroughly ashamed of the theatre guide sort of "house" journal published by some of the more serious theatres in England, which at its best is composed of self-advertisement, and publicity—full page descriptions of the principal players, topical jokes by the editor or his assistant, and illustrated advertisements of cafés, costumiers, chocolates and cigarettes. Unfortunately, the Russian "house" journals have been, for economic reasons, short lived. They are not self-paying. They are given away or sold at a very small charge, unlike the book of jokes and advertisements with a programme sandwiched in their midst, for which sixpence is charged in the London theatres.

Says Tairov, "There are two methods by which an artist may express an idea: (1) Constructivism, or symbols and emblems of the world without us; and (2) Expressionism, or symbols and emblems of the world within us. An excellent example of the first is 'The Smile of Joconda'; of the second, 'The Pantheon.' The Greek tragedy is the expression of the world, the 'Commedia dell'arte' way of expressionism—the feelings of the artist himself. . . . From expressionism ("Brambilla") to constructionism ("Phœdre") has been the path of the Moscow Kamerny theatre." By expressionism he evidently means a form of improvisation. I think it is reasonable to say that Tairov has been accustomed to think in terms of rhythms. The changes to be noted from 1923 to 1928 are changes of rhythm. The term rhythm, though a vague one, does describe a movement that characterised each production, one that actuated each object and agent of interpretation and representation and bound them together in unity. Tairov sought a rhythmic harmony in each production. Thus there was a change of rhythm in the content and form of "Girofle-Girofla," by

Lecocq, the piece that succeeded "Señor Formica." In the latter the aim was to express the duality of the theme and characters. The production was the last of the pre-social ones. Lecocq's operetta showed Tairov passing from the metaphysics of a theme to the more romantic human aspect. It is a story of brigands and a marriage tangle. The setting is Spain. There are twin daughters. One is married to a don, the other is to be married to a fierce Saracen. But pirates kidnap the unmarried one. There are complications. The Saracen demands his pound of flesh in the form of the married daughter. Her parents and friends plot to deceive the man of whom they stand in great dread. Finally the kidnapped girl escapes and returns home. The rhythmic scheme was extravagance and eccentricity expressing the movements of a barbaric lover robbed of his girl, and unusual obstacles overcome by the unexpected return of the girl from captivity. Technically it was a turning point in Tairov's method of construction. It differed in many respects from "Phœdre." It revealed the science of practical psychology and motion study at work. The principle of the avoidance of waste appeared in the removal of all unessential accessories and surfaces and angles. Acting, assisted by dancing and singing, was based on constructive tricks and irresistible acrobatics, which, in their turn, were assisted by moving tables, chairs, swings, bridges and other accessories and apparatus. In fact the whole of the essential resources of the human actor and the objects of representation were organised to realise a synthesis of the particular rhythms of the play.

1923. Tairov went on tour through Western Europe. His neo-realistic theory was received with enthusiasm in some cities, Berlin for instance, with coolness and misunderstanding in others. The Paris correspondent of the London "Observer," Mr. Philip Carr, communicated his impression to that paper, which showed that he had no idea at all what Tairov was aiming at. This was not surprising when it is remembered that dramatic critics outside Russia have not had experience of a new method

by which all things in a performance are highly simplified, and made to associate themselves with the main pursuit, *i.e.*, rhythmic harmony. They are accustomed to judge a class of entertainment marked by the use of stage cumber and speech, and for this reason would doubtless regard the introduction of new means of expression, like acrobatic acting, as new cumber.

1923-4. "THE MAN WHO WAS THURSDAY." The programme for this season was a very important one. It had at least two signs of change. These were the production of a stage version of Mr. G. K. Chesterton's book "The Man Who Was Thursday," and a recasting of Ostrovski's tragedy "The Tempest." The title of the latter is sometimes given as "The Storm," but as there happened to be another very successful piece called "Storm" being played, to save confusion the title "The Tempest" was used. Two other pieces were announced, "Masquerade," a dramatic play by Lermontov; and "The Lawyer of Babylon," a kind of musical pantomime, by Marienhof. It was about this time that the aforesaid "7 Days" began to be published. Its object was stated to be to denote and explain the work of the Kamerny theatre and to inform the artistic circles of Moscow of the new movements in art and the drama throughout the world. The latter was a very good intention, but it was never carried out. How could it be with Russia isolated from the rest of the world? "The Man Who Was Thursday" was produced one day early in 1924. It was a Red Letter day in more ways than one for the Kamerny theatre. In the first place, the New theatre gave, for the first time, an interpretation of the philosophy of collectivism as drawn from a detective story written by a foreign author. In the next, one saw the creation of a new form of construction to serve the play. The latter was designed by the architect Vesin, who also designed the Gothic setting and costumes for Claudel's "Tidings." Tairov and his collaborator expounded their plan for a setting of the future which has undergone developments since its first use. There were two objects

that influenced its conception and use; to aid the expression of the joyous philosophic spirit of collectivism, and to realise the Pantheon method of construction. Perhaps a third object might be added. It was a contribution, and a very interesting one, to the solution of the prevailing problem of stage cinematography, the attempt to get speed, movement, variety and continuity on the stage. To state all this another way, Tairov evidently came to the conviction that the collective social life was the thing to theatricalise. That it was necessary to reflect the philosophy of the nature and value of collective service together with the ideas of the joys and heights to which it leads. In Mr. Gilbert Chesterton's book he seemed to find an assertion of collective philosophy which he expounded in his house journal "7 Days," with a number of supporting quotations. That interpretation is not for those who are of the opinion that Mr. Chesterton is interested in restoring the ideology of the Middle Age form of Society, and thinks in terms of the sociology of that Age of democratic socialism, of groups and guilds and small communities and isolated property. Perhaps there is unsuspected by Mr. Chesterton a collectivism in the Middle Age guild system that is not understood by many people. At any rate, it was the mediæval spirit of Mr. Chesterton that Tairov was after, a riotous, care-free, joyous spirit of implied co-operation, which made the city a sort of temple of the communal "soul" instead of the abyss of human beings which it became under the deadly touch of the industrial revolution. Russia had missed the Renaissance, and had escaped the European industrial cancer and its disintegrating spirit, to some extent. Now it was entering upon a period of industrial creativeness when re-integration would take place and the city would become a model of the new social organisation that shall be enabled to get itself fulfilled. In other words, a psychological and economic expression of collective society. How to represent the new civics in a construction that should stand for the ideas of unity, liberty, light, movement, in short for the exalta-

tion of the urban surrounding and community as determined by economic materialism. This gave Vesin, the architect, several problems to solve. There was the general problem of the rhythmic synthesis of all the concrete constituents of an up-to-date urban surrounding. Within a limited stage space sufficient to serve the purpose of a room containing a few more or less static characters, he must erect a practical structure suggesting the height, breadth and depth of a small town, and reproducing the apparent chaos, yet order, of its rushing, nerve-racking sounds, movements and colour, moreover offering full scope for the expression of the daring, speed and variety of a set of detective-fiction characters—anarchists, criminals, detectives, secret agents—characters usually associated with the drama of an individualist form of war on society. The structure must be fluid, capable of setting everything going in a whirl at once. His spatial problem was that of extending a stage area of, say, 16 x 18 feet upward instead of outward. His solution appeared in a skeleton vertical erection having a clear space all round and reaching to the height of the proscenium opening. It consisted of an ingenious arrangement of platforms, corridors, ladders, little rooms, towers, turrets, secret passages, doors, etc., and constructed with the new mechanical and scientific materials—that is the new utilitarian engineering and building materials of the latest commercial and industrial town or city. So there were lifts, cranes, illuminated advertisements, telephones, wireless, electricity, etc., all so deftly arranged that a kinematographic action broken into 23 scenes proceeded without a pause. There was a dispute over the origin of the design for this urbanist construction. Akensov, the director of G.I.T.I.S, claimed the first right to it, but Tairov produced documents to show that he had full right to it.

The next production, that of Ostrovski's "The Tempest," rested on a new root "rhythm." It was the "rhythm" not only of true Russian tragedy, such as "The Tempest" was held to be, but of the kind of tragedy which the post-revolution period

demanded. It was both a contemporary tragedy reflecting the age when it was written, and a revolutionary tragedy reflecting the existing social conditions.

"The Tempest," which, like "The Forest," is usually referred to as a masterpiece, exhibits very typical social relations and scenes of its time. In its original version the play is really a triangle one. A spiritually-minded woman, married to a weak, debauched husband and living in the surroundings of her brutal mother-in-law, finds an affinity in a kindred "soul," a dreamer, who she has known since childhood. She cannot endure the kind of existence into which marriage has flung her. But her religious sense of duty and fear of the criticism of the people about her prevents her from obeying the law of natural sympathy, and as an alternative she commits suicide. She is a case of depersonalisation by evilly-disposed depersonalised human beings. She is robbed of her personality (or more correctly individuality) by persons who have lost theirs. Therein lies the tragedy with which Ostrovski is concerned, and he illustrates it on a big scale by reflecting the general transitional movement implied, namely, the change of society from a depersonalised to a personalised state. The tragedy of the woman is the tragedy of the old state. Russia has never had a long period of individualism similar to that of Western Europe. With the exception of the comparatively short individualising tendency that sprang up less than a hundred years ago, it has never lost hold of the mass tendency of the Middle Age. The play was fitted for Bolshevist purpose because of its suggestion of the change wrought by revolution on the Mass in personalising it.

Tairov's task was to utilise this play to illustrate bolshevist principles of personalisation, and his own theory of interpretation and representation. He achieved the first by preserving the picture of social life in a small provincial town. The mother-in-law appears very religious and brutal (Bolshevist religious motive). Her son is little more than an idiot entirely under her thumb. The wife is shown to be prejudiced and very super-



" A WINDOW IN THE COUNTRY "

At Meierhold's Theatre. The theme of the play is Soviet country life as Meierhold conceives it. The scene shows application of his principle of bio-mechanics (or physical culture). The acting is an example of the marked tendency of the new citizen.

stitious (religion). At the same time she is made the brightest spot against a background of unspeakable social hypocrisy and darkness. She is stifled by an atmosphere that contains no new idea (new knowledge motive). She tries to love her husband, but fails (marriage motive). She loves the poor nephew of a rich merchant (equality and poor lover motives). She is brought into contact with her lover and falls (new divorce and free union motives). She is overcome by religious scruples. She thinks she hears the voice of God in the storm (in herself) and she confesses her guilt (the God within us motive). The lover is sent to Siberia through the instrumentality of his uncle (brutality of the rich merchant class motive), and social persecution drives the woman to suicide (rich class-society tyranny motive). Besides reflecting points of the new social ideology, the play brings out the strong religious mysticism of the peasant.

The original version is symbolic of the national process of traditional vicious depersonalisation and the coming of a more fruitful personalisation. With the suicide of the wife the object of depersonalisation disappears, but the spirit of personalisation remains. There is, too, the bolshevist affirmation of rights. In Ostrovski's "The Tempest" love, for instance, has no rights. People wed not because they have an affinity (called love), but because they must find an affinity (called mate) when they wed. In marriage there is no separation, the wife believes that it is a contract that is binding till death. Further, that home and the grave are the same thing. That by dying she lives. The rest are always too late.

The setting was a further experiment in constructive realism. It expressed a Greek-like rhythm of tragedy. It consisted of a scenic platform of massive beams and a shelter-like space of which it formed the roof. It was in fact the outcome of a search for construction as simple and expressive in its rhythm and plastic form of art as the early Greeks sought for their productions. The costumes were constructed on similar lines. The element of sound also played an important part in the produc-

tion. Instead of the usual symphonic orchestra, the sounds of the air, its vibrations, were utilised by means of a phonetic orchestration on which experiments are being made. It should be noted that the scenic platform was a low one, and the geometrical lines of the whole setting were moving down as though to crush out life, in contrast to the lines of "Thursday," which were vertical, all moving up to express escape and joy. Tairov attached much importance to "The Tempest" production, which in his opinion pointed not only to his "rhythmic" and plastic path in the past, but to his concrete path in the future.

There is not space to describe in detail the development of Tairov and his varied productions between 1924 and 1928. The development was more and more in the direction of a bolshevist or socialist content, and a rhythmic and plastic concrete-realistic form. He continued to be pre-occupied with the principles of rhythmic movements which he had worked out in past years in his laboratory and school.

1924-25. "HAIRY APE" and "SAINT JOAN." Amongst the important productions of this season were Eugene O'Neill's "Hairy Ape," and Mr. George Bernard Shaw's "Saint Joan." The first piece followed an indifferent piece called "Kukirol," which illustrated the evil of a commercial idea conquering the whole world by means of unscrupulous publicity. At this time the Kamerny theatre was in very low water and Tairov saw that its very existence depended on the success of "Hairy Ape." Fortunately it was a success in spite of the fact that the subject was badly and illogically handled by its author. The play was individualistic in intention, and its conclusion (Janke passively going into the monkey cage instead of making a fight of it, in the bolshevist way, which is not a passive way) was not good bolshevism. However, Tairov saw a great deal in the play. It could prove that at last his theatre had found its way to the questions of the day which the common folk were putting to the New

theatre and demanding a clear answer. He saw that the theme could really be read as the struggle against the present capitalist or financial age. He saw that a Marxian interpretation could be put upon the conclusion. The cage incident represented a tragedy of the revolt of an individual who is ignorant of the collective movement and the end and means of a new class, and who seeks revenge not class victory. In short, Tairov regarded the play as a tragedy of individualism, of man struggling alone Laokoon-like against conditions, instead of in association with his fellows.

The representation was very effective. There were a realistic construction consisting of a section of an Atlantic liner divided lengthwise, showing decks, stokehole, etc., and a series of "rhythms." Two scenes stood out, the stokers at work and the labour "rhythm" obtained by the play of muscles, the act of stoking, and the flow of bright flame carving out shapes and setting them in motion; in sharp contrast were the capitalistic rhythmic movements of the millionaires wearing hideous masks and jazzing along Fifth Avenue, after attending church, the whole in harmony with the colour scheme. It seems to be an invariable rule in interpreting plays of this kind to exaggerate or symbolise the worst side of the hated characters. Thus the millionaires were made to look like neurotic imbeciles.

One received a similar impression from the production of Mr. Bernard Shaw's "Saint Joan." The objects of bolshevist indignation and English middle-class approval were strongly emphasised by extravagance. The Dauphin was a clown, the representatives of the Church were vulgar and offensive, Saint Joan, as admirably played by Alice Koonen, wore in the trial scene a strange costume consisting of a pair of baggy hunting breeches and mediæval armour and chains. It was more picturesque than correct. The earl of Warwick wore an eyeglass probably because people in Russia think it is the hall-mark of an Englishman. Probably Tairov was attracted to the piece by the Irish author's comic conception of socialism, which with his

queer attempt to whitewash Joan were just the things to make Moscow laugh. In any case it contained plenty of material for a demonstration of Mr. Shaw's advance along the fashionable path of sociology. In Mr. Shaw's attempt to throw a Fabian light on the reason why Joan was what she was, why she acted as she did, why she did not please everybody, and why she was a rationalist and not a divinely-inspired Joan of the Sword, there are matters of religious conscience, superstition, and persecution, of war, of patriotism, of Church and State all from the point of view of the individualist socialist, which, it need hardly be said, is not that of the bolshevist socialist.

It was from these ingredients that Tairov extracted his series of rhythms to set the scenery in motion. On the whole the concrete realistic construction was highly simplified, a background of vertical spears suggesting the military motive, adaptable and collapsible church benches, the ecclesiastical one. A dominating note of red in the colour scheme suggested the militant spirit, or maybe, that Moscow wanted Mr. George Bernard Shaw's blood. There is no doubt that the bolshevists disliked England's vague socialist and apostle of long life and prophet of an all-thought Earthly Paradise. They said so by causing his play to be withdrawn after a few performances.

1926-7-8. Tairov was now in his full social stride, and proved it by producing a number of plays by means of which he got on better terms with the new audience and at the same time approached nearer and nearer to the social attitude of Meierhold. Among them were "Rozita," by Globi (1926); "Desire Under The Elms," by O'Neill (1926); and "Antigone," a tragedy, by Walter Hasenclever, the German author (1927). The full list of productions will be found in the appendices. The theme of "Rozita" was a revolution in Spain caused by the king's love for a street singer. The action takes place in Barcelona. Rozita is a pretty anarchist with whom everybody is in love. She loves one of her own class. But there is an obstacle, the king loves her. To overcome the obstacle the king must

be removed. As Rozita hates kings, and even incites the crowd to sing a song, "To Hell with the King," in which she induces the king to join, and the king pursues her continuously, there is much intrigue and plotting and counter-plotting, which is increased by the fact that Rozita and her lover are always being pursued by the police. In the end, after scenes recalling some in "La Tosca," Rozita contrives that her lover shall undergo a mock execution and the king shall be poisoned. "Desire Under The Elms" was chiefly remarkable owing to the object that led Tairov to produce it. He regarded it as a present-day version of "Romeo and Juliet." It was a present-day play produced by present-day methods answering the questions about love and sex relations put to it by a present-day materialistic-minded audience. Sophocles' "Antigone" was adapted by Hasenclever to emphasise the revolutionary character which he believes it contains. He saw in "Antigone" the first great pacifist. William II was introduced as the self-appointed instrument of heaven. The tragedy was first offered to Max Reinhardt, who refused it because, as Hasenclever alleges, he has sold himself to bourgeoisie interests. Tairov happened to visit Berlin, Hasenclever saw his theatrical matter and manner, and straightway "Antigone" went its way to Moscow.

C. GRANOVSKI. 1923-28

In the second period, with the gradual building of the New theatre, the story of the Big Five, is then that of their steady approach to Meierhold, and of their acceptance of a more radical point of view than hitherto held by them. The theatre became more and more a State preserve over which the common-folk had full right of way. It was controlled by the State; behind the State were the people. The leading directors put their rich experiences at the service of the people; they were allowed to exercise a power more exclusive than was generally liked; but it was not interfered with so long as it was beneficial and of practical worth to the theatre, and it was flexible and showed

an inclination to move in the direction of the common demand. It was tolerated because it was a passing power, and soon the people would be completely at the back of the theatre with its social policy.

This was precisely the reason for the change already noted in the content and method of Tairov. Owing, no doubt, to outside pressure he had taken to giving the public a type of exhibition which differed materially from his early one. He had replaced neo-realism with concrete realism; the attempt to express art values only by the attempt to express revolutionary and social ones. At the same time he managed to continue to apply his theory of rhythmic harmony. He was like a painter with his eye on the objective world.

A similar change was perceptible in the content and form of the third outstanding director, Granovski. It seemed to be announced by the change in the name of his theatre. It used to be called the Moscow Jewish Kamerny theatre; now it became the Moscow State Jewish theatre, which meant that if it had not become intensely objective, it had at least come into line with the definite purpose of the Government to bring by a single principle, all parts of the theatre together. The principle was bolshevist socialisation.

The change from what may have been principles of his own to those of the Government, showed itself in the intention of his new plays. In his first period he was mainly concerned with expressing the social life, customs, habits of the Small Town Jew, rather from a point of view of Jewish nationalism than of bolshevist meaning. It is true that there was a good deal of adaptation in his work. "The Sorceress" and "200,000" were for instance freely adapted from the originals and brought up to date so as to harmonise with the fashionable style of interpretation and representation, that is, a mixture of dancing, singing, acrobatics and athletics shown to the greatest advantage by settings specially invented for the purpose. This kind of mimicry combined with the tendency of the plays or spectacles

o poke fun at racial vanities and weaknesses, attracted large audiences composed of Jews and Russians, that we with this folk improvisation, although it contributed comparatively little to the burning social questions of the hour.

The plays of the second period were marked by a decided socialist intention. Four productions will illustrate this.

1923-24. "A NIGHT IN THE OLD MARKET" ("At Night"). A tragedy-carnival by I. L. Perez. The piece was thrown into the form of a dramatic fragment with but few words, 250 in all, and with a special musical arrangement illustrating the two sides of the tragedy—the tragedy of Life and Death. It was interpreted chiefly by movement and music. It will be gathered that the theme was one belonging to the New theatre which had from the beginning specialised on the subject of Life and Death. In "The Destruction of Europe" Meierhold presented a strong contrast between a Western Europe struggling in the agonies of death as expressed by the shocking debaucheries of the rich middle and upper classes, and a rejuvenated Russia symbolised by the sports field and the gymnasium. "At Night" presented an equally strong contrast but in different terms. An old market in the centre of a small Jewish town is made a symbol of a decaying world. On the stage it is a Jewish world composed of representatives of the synagogue, of commerce and the users of the brothel, and other types, all rotten but all clinging frantically to life and its fossils and superstitions. They are influenced by dead traditions, and they manifest the signs of a death-centred existence. When finally the dead are resurrected and set beside the living there is seen to be no difference. The moral seems to be that the old world is dead and those who believe in it and its doctrines and ways are dead also. The old world might easily be taken for old Russia, and the types, like plague stricken rats, for the residue of the old population who are unconverted to bolshevism. A ghastly synagogue interior, hideous masks and dances helped to produce a terrifying atmosphere.

238 THE NEW SPIRIT IN THE RUSSIAN THEATRE

1925-26. "THE TENTH COMMANDMENT" and "The 137 Childrens' Homes." The first was a political satire with scenes aimed at England. There was, for instance, one in which Jerusalem was symbolised by a lamb, while England was represented by a policeman.

The second was the well-known and popular impostor theme with which Gogol's "Revizor" had made the new audience familiar. An impostor in need of money conceives the idea of visiting a small country town where he passes himself off as a representative of the bolshevist Government. He claims to be authorised to collect money for the establishment of a number of homes for children. The frightened people pay up, but the impostor is exposed in the end. The theme was a topical bolshevist one. As a direct outcome of the Black Famine an attempt was made by the foreign Relief Workers and the Government to establish in the stricken areas homes for the large number of children who had lost their parents. Imposture was soon busy seeking to make profit out of the attempt.

1925-26. "THE ADVENTURE OF MADAM SEGAL." A social satire developing Granovski's new tendency.

1926-27. "TROUADEK" by Jules Romain (or after Romain). Looking for a subject for a present-day satirical play that should express Europe of to-day, Granovski found "Trouadek." In adapting the material he followed his usual plan. The author provided the material; Granovski made the spectacle. Romain's treatment was faulty. He put his hero in an imaginary surrounding; Granovski, thinking of his audience, was compelled to substitute a concrete one and accordingly introduced Monte Carlo and Paris. There were other improvisations on Romain's theme. Music by Pulver was introduced in the form of couplets and songs with the object of illustrating the rhythmic movement, and of underlining the most important parts of the spectacle. All this provided a solution to the problem of "creating" a satirical spectacle in the Russian fashionable manner. The spectacle was divided into two part

each containing two acts. The first showed Trouadek sunk in debauch; the second, a leader of upright men. Again, the theme of Life and Death. Again the liberation or purifying motive illustrated by means of vivid contrast.

1927-28. "THE TRAVELS OF BENJAMIN III." In this latest of his eccentric musical comedies Granovski is seen still preoccupied with the subject of two states, or two worlds, such as events in Russia has discovered for theatricalised treatment. He has taken a Jewish folk tale, as expressed by Sforin and adapted it in his usual free manner. He exhibits two Jewish friends who set out in search of adventures hoping to discover some at least of the glory of an old Jewry. The sight of the cart of a travelling bookseller transports them to the realm of imagination where one of them has the good fortune to marry the daughter of the Mogul of India, Alexander the Great, and forthwith proceeds to assume the title of Benjamin III, King of the Jews. Of course there is the usual sequel. Benjamin and his companion come to their senses, return home to their village, to proclaim the materialist doctrine that real life is the stuff of which they and their village is made, and not dreams. Once more we witness an act of disillusionment such as the new audience in Russia is taught to believe is its true business to undergo. The latter is to awake and realise the truth. A play called "The Trouadek's Marriage," by the same author, was performed at the Vakhtangov theatre.

D. LUNACHARSKI

I. STATE OPERA

In his second period, Lunacharski while continuing his speculations about the value of classical and romantic forms as a means of cultural-education through plays and operas tended, under the influence of increasing Left pressure, towards a more radical attitude. This became apparent in the State theatres and opera houses under his control and, to some extent, direc-

tion. Towards the close of the first period we saw him accepting and defending realistic-expressionism as a form of expression most fitted to realise his idea of communicating to the Mass the objective side of human life.

At the outset of the new period he was faced with a problem and two solutions. The problem was how to produce plays and operas with a bolshevist, or Marxian, content, and an attractive form. The two solutions were; a body of young bolshevist authors and composers capable of expressing the life-centred movement of the epoch; or an elaborate process of re-writing the text and adapting the social content of old plays and operas, while retaining the fine music of the latter. Simply it was the re-interpretation of content in the light of Marxism as reflected by Lenin.

As though to stimulate the production of what he considered the proper intensely objective species of play, he wrote (or made) a number of plays himself, some of which were turned into operas and films. A few may be quoted as illustrating his conception of play content dictated by the Marxian doctrine of materialism united with the latest notion of class-struggle, and other doctrines and notions dictated by the problems of collective necessities. Typical examples are: "Cromwell," an attempt to read up-to-date revolutionary tendencies in the Protector. "The People," an epic play in spectacle form. Its five acts cover the history of the world from "before religion" till "after evolution." It is history from the Marxian standpoint. "Velvet and Rags." The plot is based on "Adrian Van-bower's Marriage," by Edward Stuckel. As the title suggests, the theme is the one fairly common in Russia to-day of the contrast between the rich and the poor. It is the kind of contrast that Dickens expressed in English, or rather that the bolshevists read into those works of Dickens which they approve of. "Poison," a study of the new social life in Russia in the light of Marx. It is of the "Father and Son" order. The father a hard and fast bolshevist has a son who repudiates his father's attitude. The



"ROZITA"

At the Moscow Academic Kamerny theatre. Scene between Rozita (Alice Koonen), the pretty flower-girl revolutionist and the King of Spain who is in love with her. In the end she is the instrument of the King's death and the

son's "revolt" is an excuse for introducing to the audience a picture of the degraded and corrupt circles of the old order with whom he is in sympathy. Spies, counter-revolutionaries and other reactionaries who constitute the bohemians, plot to get rid of the father by poisoning him. Poison is handed to the son by his lover, but cowardice and filial love step in and all ends well with the band of plotters on their way to the gallows. "Don Quixote Released." Here we have Don Quixote not tilting at windmills and sheep, but rescuing three men from the gallows. The latter use their liberty to start a revolution against a reigning duke who once caused Quixote to be imprisoned. Quixote, however, does not like revolutions. He helps the duke only to see him employ worse than revolutionary methods to crush the revolutionists. Thus the counter-revolutionist is shown to be blacker than the revolutionist. These four plays suffice to describe Lunacharski's method of pouring the new revolutionary purpose into old bottles.

Turning to opera, one finds two tendencies; that of bolshevising operas by altering the texts of existing operas with good music and by reading into the works by great composers socialist and sociological intentions which they may, or may not contain; and that of encouraging new comers to compose operas.

The first yielded a number of classics and latter-day masterpieces with texts and sometimes parts of the music, so altered as to be not only almost unrecognisable but the cause of prolonged heated controversy. The second brought forth a few young composers of talent. The first all-bolshevist opera was however not forthcoming till 1925.

Controversy raged round the question of the "Spirit of the Time." One side held that the Government were doing their duty by the Mass by fulfilling the intention announced at the beginning of the new regime, to remove music from the isolated region of a limited and elect section of society and make it fully accessible to the common-folk. The other side

held that there was such a thing as the spirit of the age in music that could not be destroyed. Therefore music and opera written in one age could not be used in the present age without threatening to corrupt or destroy it, no matter how the text and music were altered. Charpentier's sociological opera "Louise" is said to express the rights of women as the matter was understood in his day. Could this expression be fitted into another age with another social, economic and mental outlook? There was a good deal of trouble over the performance of Rimski-Korsakov's "Legend of the Invisible City of Kitesh" with text untouched. The music contained mystical and religious elements that unfitted it for bolshevist consumption. "The Life of the Tsar" was objected to on anti-monarchial grounds. "Eugene Onegin" had an idyllic scene that was incompatible with present requirements. "Lohengrin" was not in the materialistic spirit of Marx.

However the re-writing of opera texts went on. There were numerous works suitable for adaptation owing to the close connection between music and politics and revolution in the early and mid-nineteenth century. And in works that were not markedly political or revolutionary there was found something to inspire the audience with life and vigour necessary to enable it to fight and work. Doubtless it was this something that accounted for the inclusion of Beethoven and Mozart. Mozart's music was vital, and Beethoven was heroic and believed passionately in man (as well as in God). Heroism was another factor that dictated choice and led to the performance of works by composers of Russia's heroic period of music. Borodin has been very fashionable since the Revolution. Rimski-Korsakov and Moussorgski too have been the vogue with the Mass. The lists provided in the appendices convey an idea of the popular taste for music in Russia since the Revolution, but after what has been said too much importance must not be attached to the titles given, for as a bolshevist writer once put it, "Unfortunately, we have no proletarian music, but still there is music for the

proletariat," meaning of course music arranged for the proletarians.

But that was said in the first period. Since then the bolshevist composer has made his appearance to voice the time. "Smerch," a revolutionary opera, dealt with the overthrow of kings and capitalists by the toilers. Another revolutionary opera was "Red Leningrad" by Gladkovski and Prussak. Revolutionary ballets have also been produced, for instance, "Djibella" by V. Deshevov, which dealt with the struggle between the Near East and Imperialism. Another, on the subject of "Robespierre," was written by V. Lopukhov. A third revolutionary ballet, "The Red Poppy" with music by Gliere tells the story of a Chinese girl who fell in love with a bolshevist captain. Chinese reactionaries in league with a British commander plot to poison the captain. The girl defeats the plot but is shot by the reactionaries. The curtain falls on her gazing as she dies on a huge poppy. The poppy is no doubt a symbol of Russia's intended domination in China.

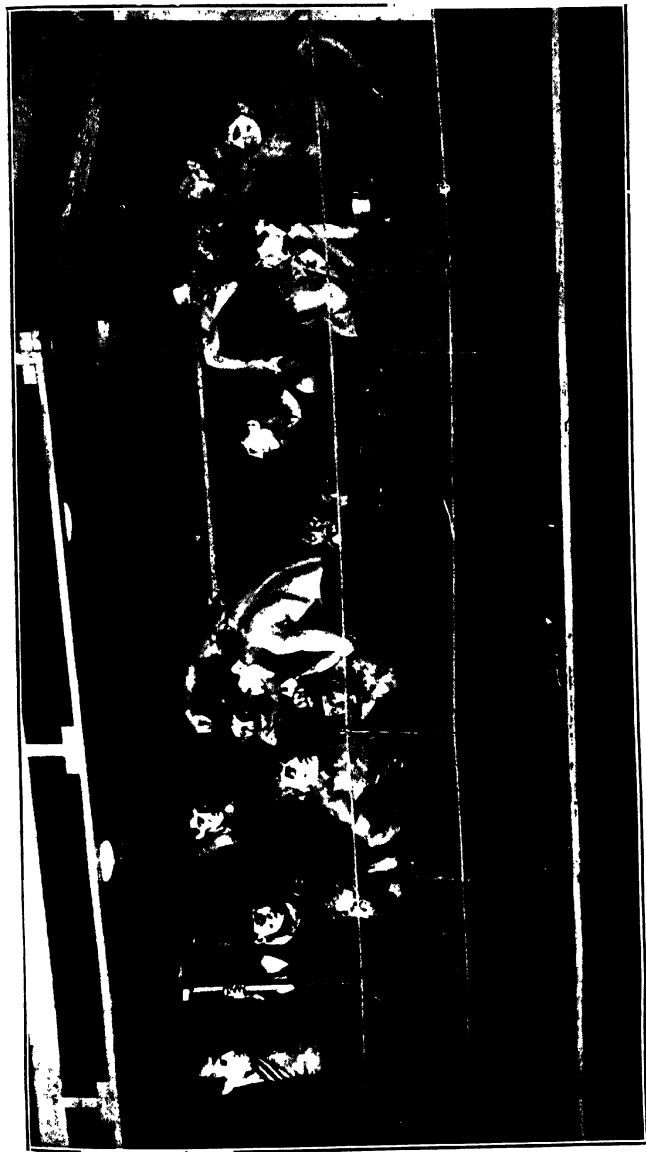
Along with this intensification of the socialist content of opera and ballet went an intensification of setting necessary to assist the movement of acting, dancing, acrobatics, etc. This need of the development of setting to keep pace with the development of plastic and gymnastic movement will be better understood when it is pointed out that attached to the Marinski Opera House at Leningrad is a school of 100 acrobats. The influence of the Left theatre exerting itself upon the Opera Houses served to effect a transformation of the setting similar to that noticed in the more conservative of the Right Centre and Right theatres. Settings were invented to raise interpretation, especially by means of acrobatics, and representation to the highest level of significance. In other words backgrounds were sought that were capable of emphasising the peculiar character, political, revolutionary, and other, that had been imparted to an opera or ballet by the composer, or by the director who altered the text and music. Such backgrounds very often

supplied something missing in the work performed. As an illustration of my meaning let me take the production of Prokoviev's "The Love For Three Oranges." When Mr. Rutland Boughton the English composer saw this work performed in Russia he was very disappointed. It seemed to him so unrevolutionary that he eagerly recommended it to Mr. Charles Cochran, the English impresario, as a work that he might safely and profitably produce in London. But evidently Mr. Boughton failed to take into consideration the revolutionary setting which would not please London and the network of rope ladders and other apparatus for the use of highly-trained acrobats such as are not to be found in a London theatre or Opera House. Some of the new settings were carried to extravagant lengths. There was, for instance, Jakulov's machine-like construction for Wagner's "Rienzi." It consisted of a semi-circular erection carried to the roof of the stage, with terraces at different levels and trapeze apparatus at a dizzy height.

The most convincing evidence of the movement to the Left of the academic theatres is provided by the permanent exhibition of theatre designs at the Museum of the Academic theatre at Leningrad. The Museum contains upward of 70,000 exhibits. Among them is a unique collection, arranged in chronological order, of designs for scenery from the earliest period of the State theatre history to the present. It is both an analysis and synthesis of the "decorative" work of the theatre. It begins with the old stupid and meaningless settings and continues through a maze of designs that seem mere excretions and finally arrives at a mass of recent work that is simply overflowing with the exuberance of livingness expressed in terms of theatrical setting.

2. THE LITTLE THEATRE

An excellent illustration of the change wrought on the old State or Imperial theatres by the Revolution is afforded by a single



"HAIRY APE"

O'Neill's play produced by Tairov at the Moscow Academic Kamerny theatre. A scene on the liner. The construction, a liner divided lengthways, might be called naval architecture. It is determined to a great extent by the emotional rhythm of the play. In this particular part of the setting, the designer has sought for the most crushing surrounding for the savage human life it contains. The figures express the rhythm of conflict. In spite of his social realism

theatre, the Little theatre of Moscow. Not long ago the director of the theatre gave me a long and interesting account of this change which I should like to reproduce in full here if space but permitted. This State Academic theatre is the oldest Russian theatre. To-day it is an integral part of the youngest. It was founded 105 years ago. It has always stood for realistic truth and has never been associated with æstheticism. For a short time the Revolution let it alone and it continued to handle its classic themes. Then came the need of adjusting itself to the new public service and of becoming an organic part of the New theatre in the building. So from classic plays it turned to those by new writers engaged in sociological expression of the epoch. From classic plays, thence to the romantic plays by Lunacharski and Smolin, thence to the new plays by bolshevist playwrights, Trenev, Glebov and Bill-Belotserkovski, such has been the evolutionary path of this important theatre. The ideology of the new society, the new practical sociology, themes concerned with political and class-struggle, the new outlooks and interests of society, the new relationship between the individual and society and environment, the success and failure of the individual to adjust himself to the new collective life and surrounding, all these things have found their way to the Little theatre through the medium of plays expressing the epoch and ideological motives. Among the plays produced have been "Velvet and Rags," "The Bear's Wedding," "Ivan Kozyr," "The Granary," "Steer to the Left," "Notre Dame de Paris," "The Wayside Inn," "Lubov Yarovaia," and "1917."

In method, the Little theatre supports the current fashion of adapting classics to the needs of to-day by means of a careful selection of incidents, and social types, just as in his re-writing of Gogol's "Revizor," Meierhold has selected the more neurotic types of to-day. Form reveals that the theatre leans heavily on the Left for ideas. While settings are designed to give fullest value to interpretation, they reflect the current tendency towards the development of the construction, and the

kinematographic stage. They, in fact, fall in line with concrete-realism.

A brief description of two of the latest productions will indicate the direction which the theatre is taking.

1926-27. "LUBOV YAROVAIA" by Trenev. It is an epic picture of the Civil war. The action passes in a town in South Russia during the advance and retreat of Denekin. Interwoven into the general revolutionary events of plot and counter-plot, is the "spiritual" story of a woman who, at first believing herself to have been widowed by the war and is sickened by the very thought of war itself, turns "red." Her husband however comes to life as a die-hard anti-bolshevist, and a most active counter-revolutionist. There is an inevitable struggle between the man and the woman which ends in the woman becoming deeply absorbed by the "Red" movement. The play has points of special sociological interest. It offers an analysis of the new woman, according to bolshevism, on the stage of the New theatre. It suggests the uncompromising attitude of the authorities towards Whites and reactionaries and counter-revolutionists. All sympathy is directed towards the "Reds." In this respect it may be compared with "The Day of the Turbins" produced at the Moscow Art Academic theatre. This play treats a similar theme but in such a way that much sympathy is invited on behalf of the Whites.

1927-28. "1917" by Sukhanov and Platon. This is a very ambitious attempt to theatricalise a revolutionary historical survey by reflecting the stages of the revolutionary movement between February and October (or March and November) 1917. Needless to say the action is too vast for the roofed-in theatre stage even though a special setting of a kinematographic character is provided. The kinema itself is the proper medium for the expression of such big events, the downfall of Tsarism, and the emergence of Bolshevism together with the chaotic ones that went between. Still it is history theatricalised, and for this reason of sociological value. Among the repre-

sentative figures are Nicholas II and his supporters, members of the Imperial Duma, of the Provisional Government, of the Central Committee of the Bolsheviks, and the well-known figures of the Petrograd Soviet, of red guards, sailors, and the rest.

3. THE STATE CHILDREN'S THEATRE

During the second period this theatre has served two purposes; to set the children moving towards the Left and to attract and bring together a set of unfortunate outcast children who have no parents and no proper means of existence. In the latter respect it has done much materially towards solving the very difficult problem of Russia's waifs and strays. The former policy of the theatre remains unaltered. Children, for instance, suggest plays for production, one of the recent subjects being, "The Little Communist" a title suggesting the reflection of the lives of the young proletarians. Sociologically important is the act of putting on the stage the child mind undergoing a process of bolshevist development.

4. THE RIGHT CENTRE THEATRES

The lessers, or minors, of the disappearing Centre Group may be considered here as coming within Lunacharski's jurisdiction. They, too, have moved strongly towards the Left both in content and form. Among them are the Jewish theatre, the Vakhtangov theatre, the Semperant, and the theatre of Satire.

Something of the tendency in the Jewish theatre may be appreciated by a single example. "On the Chain of Confession" by I. L. Perez produced at the State Jewish theatre of White Russia, deals with a theme similar to that of "The Dybbuk." A student immersed in the study of the Talmud falls in love with a young girl whose rich parents intervene and betroth her to a wealthy suitor. The girl destroys herself, and her lover is put on the confession chain. The theatre did all

248 THE NEW SPIRIT IN THE RUSSIAN THEATRE

it could to turn this piece into a revolutionary spectacle, but the author's philosophical and reactionary rhetoric, although partly re-written, interfered with the revolutionary intention. The struggle between two worlds, the dying world of superstitious faith and capitalism and the quickening world of the poor but aspiring young bolsheviks, was, however, expressed. The setting by the painter Souhker-Ber-Ribak had a strong touch of novelty. It represented the labyrinth of the old Jewish Ghetto, and everything was covered with zinc and tin in order to obtain lighting effects.

The Left tendency in the Vakhtangov theatre (named after the celebrated producer) may be conveyed through a single illustration. The play, "Virineia" taken from a book of that name by L. Seifulina, is designed to show the ferment in the Russian village. The first part exhibits the ignorance, superstition and pig-like state of the peasants under the Tsar; the second, the change and improvement under the bolsheviks.

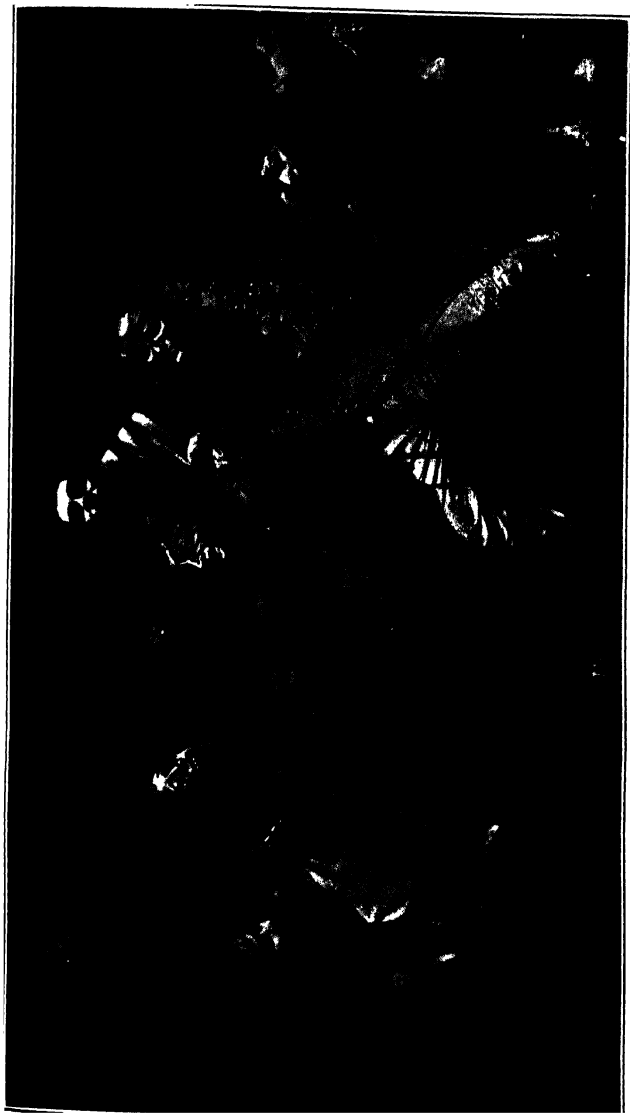
The tendency in the theatre of Satire is reflected by an entertainment called "About Love." It is a brilliant and biting satire on prevailing bolshevik manners and customs and new types: love, marriage, divorce, the Nepmen, new bourgeoisie, bureaucrats, and other facts and phenomena come up for judgment and criticism.

"The Semperant" is concerned, as formerly, with improvisation, but its themes are no longer subjective but objective with a decided socialist leaning. For example, its programme for 1927 included plays entitled, "The Politics of Mr. Dawn," "Korotyskaia Revolution," "The Tsar of All Russia," "Jesus from Notre Dame."

E. STANISLAVSKI. 1923-28

I. MOSCOW ART ACADEMIC THEATRE

The evolution of the Moscow Art Academic theatre under its famous director, Stanislavski, closely resembles that of the



" A NIGHT IN 'THE OLD MARKET' "

At the Moscow State Jewish theatre. The beginning of the *Dance Macabre*. A study in costume, and in make-up as practiced at the Jewish theatre. The scene shows the elaborate and detailed plastic masks built on the faces of the actors. This facial make-up serves to differentiate the characters. The central figure is inviting the others to dance.

Little theatre. From the old repertory of classics and modern masterpieces to plays and operettas with a revolutionary meaning, or written in revolutionary days, to plays by new bolshevist playwrights, Ivanov, Leonov, Bulgakov and the rest. From the old to the new in the making, such has been the order of evolution. "Cain," "The Daughter of Madam Angot," "Revizor," a prolonged tour abroad and then a plunge into the depths of bolshevist service. "Pugatchevschena," "Nicholas I and the Decabrists," "The Day of the Turbins," "The Marriage of Figaro," "The Armoured Train," "Untilovsk," such have formed an important part of the new repertory.

In each new production could be seen the movement to the Left, the development of the treatment of the revolutionary and social theme, the endeavour to express the new ideology and the explanation of complex sociological facts of the age through which bolshevist Russia is passing, facts that shall be of the utmost value to the future historian who shall turn to the New theatre for information of the facts of the human life of to-day.

Thus the solution of the problem of the Moscow Art Academic theatre's new repertory plan, which had been a long time coming, was reached after the return from America when a re-organisation of the work of the theatre took place, partly under the pressure of public opinion and the authorities. The solution was found in the principle of the reflection of the outside world and its bewildering current tendencies. Or in other words, in the business of laying worthy wreaths on the Revolution and glorifying the best of current events. In this way the Moscow Art Academic theatre put on new life, became to some extent rejuvenated by the new spirit embodied in its productions and conciliated its old enemies who from the first had been in deadly opposition to its compromising attitude.

A glance at its programme since 1926 shows how Stanislavski has gradually and definitely entered the bolshevist revolutionary field. There is plenty of evidence of a search for plays to reflect the epoch. Plays written round the Decembrist

250 THE NEW SPIRIT IN THE RUSSIAN THEATRE

outburst, around Pugatchev, around the exciting events preceding the Revolution, the Revolution itself, and the Civil War, are among the new productions.

The important steps taken during 1926-28 towards an extreme radical position find illustration in two outstanding plays.

I. "THE DAY OF THE TURBINS" by Bulgakov. This play like "Lubov Yarovaia" has for a theme an episode in the Civil war. But it treats it differently. The period is 1918-19 just when the Germans have evacuated the Ukraine and the "Reds" are making a victorious advance and clearing up the undesirable elements. The advance is opposed and gives rise to several incidents that are made to reflect to the credit of the "White" officers, like the one who with a few men defends Kiev after the evacuation of the town in 1918. The Turbins are made to reflect all the emotions of the advance alternating between fear and hope. Finally the "Reds" appear and the day of the Turbins is over. The curtain falls on the singing of the International. The play caused a great uproar on account of its compromising attitude. The "White" officers were made to appear heroes and more than one incident, like the playing of the old Russian National Anthem by the Turbins, suggested reaction. However Stanislavski successfully defended it and it became a great success.

1917. "THE ARMOURD TRAIN" by V. Ivanov. This was produced in honour of the November Celebrations and is said to have put Stanislavski on the roll of bolshevist honour. It deals with another aspect of Civil war, war between Siberian peasants and Admiral Kolchak during the latter's brief period of power. It reveals the peasants turned into wild insurgents by acts of unforgivable cruelty on the part of Kolchak's forces, and contains many powerful scenes that remind us to what extremes the primitive man will go when his passions are aroused. The strongest scene is the one from which the play takes its title. The peasant partisans are shown lying in ambush

for the Armoured Train containing "White" soldiers. They try to find a volunteer who will throw himself before the train in order to stop it. Eventually the train is besieged by the peasants and the officer in charge goes mad for lack of food and water.

Though Stanislavski seems to have turned resolutely to the Left from 1926 on, his system of acting and stagecraft were not materially affected by the new attitude which led to "The Armoured Train" climax in November, 1927. There was no attempt to introduce acrobatics and athletics, and with one exception, the settings did not exhibit the influence of the construction movement. The one exception was "Lysistrata" for which Rabinovitch designed a white and yellow wood construction to get movement and ensemble. It consisted of a classical framework of semi-circular colonnades joined by platforms forming levels, and made to rotate. Probably this construction did not owe anything to Stanislavski. "Lysistrata" was produced by the 1st M.A.T. Company at the Moscow Art theatre while Stanislavski was in America. This absence of constructions does not mean that the formal interiors and exteriors of pre-war days were retained unaltered. The new species of revolutionary plays dictated changes in setting to enable violent revolutionary and Civil war scenes to be represented. In "The Day of the Turbins" there is a running fight between the "Reds" and "Whites" that could not take place effectively on a flat stage. In "The Armoured Train" there is a fight on the roof of a chapel which could be represented in the old manner.

Stanislavski received rewards for his new loyalty. He was made an Artist of the People, and during the Celebration of the 30th Anniversary of his theatre in October, 1928, both he and his partner, V. Nemirovich-Dantchenko, were assigned life pensions of three hundred roubles a month. £30 a month does not sound much in these days when a commonplace film star receives thousands a week.

2. THE M.A.T. STUDIOS

It was during this period, when Stanislavski's theatre was undergoing marked changes, that the famous M.A.T. Studios began to break away from the parent theatre and continued to do so till finally they were with one exception all separated from it. The Third Studio took the name of its founder and was called the Vakhtangov theatre. The Second Studio was merged in the M.A.T. The Fourth Studio became automatic, was renamed the Moscow Realistic theatre and worked in Moscow districts. By 1927 the First Studio had been promoted to a separate automatic theatre under the name of the 2nd Moscow Art Academic theatre, having nothing to do with the parent theatre and producing significant new plays of its own. All that was left to the Moscow Art Academic theatre was a dramatic wing called the Small Stage, which was always bracketed with the parent stage on the theatre posters. It was on this Small Stage that a version of the "Two Orphans" under the title of "The Sisters Gerard" was produced during the Ten Years' Celebrations in November, 1927. When I wondered why this old melodrama was played, Stanislavski told me it was because the play was set in a revolutionary period.

A very good example of the kind of material handled by the 2nd Moscow Art Academic theatre appears in "Evgraf Seeks Adventure," by Faiko. It is one of the new plays of bolshevist life aiming to expose the bad elements in the present-day social structure. It has a sort of moral that those who play with the fire are likely to get burnt. Evgraf is a young barber's assistant. He has a taste for verse and adventure. The author uses him to demonstrate how pliable material of the kind is seized upon by the bohemian "Whites" and turned to their purpose, that of undermining the bolshevist regime. Evgraf is seen in their clutches fostering his literary ambition. He is rescued by a bolshevist friend. The "Whites" are trapped.



“A NIGHT IN THE OLD MARKET”

The Dance Macabre. A mystery play of life and death representing the later development of the Moscow Academic Jewish theatre. The setting is a mixture of the church and synagogue with the hand of God suspended from the ceiling. The funereal atmosphere of the scene is heightened by the arrangement of the architectural forms, the ghastly facial expressions of the figures, and the use of light and shadow in a manner that is rare in this production as in all others.

Evgraf, who kills the chief corrupter in a fit of mad rage, afterwards kills himself in remorse.

The well-known Musical Studio under Nemirovich-Dantchenko seems to have taken a similar revolutionary path in order to conform to the demand of the moment. This much is made plain by the titles of its productions. "Carmencita and the Soldier," a bolshevist version of Bizet's "Carmen;" Lecocq's "Madam Angot;" Offenbach's operetta, "Pericola;" a musical version of Aristophane's "Lysistrata," with its early interpretation of a "suffragette" movement.

Besides this there is the C. S. Stanislavski State Opera Studio where Stanislavski himself was very active at one time seeking to apply his pre-war psychological principles of interpretation and acting to the opera. Among the operas produced by him were "The Tsar's Bride" by Rimski-Korsakov, and "Eugene Onegin" by Tschaikovski, "A Night in May," and "Boris Gudonov" by Moussorgski. I say at one time because the latest news is that Stanislavski is gradually giving up all work except that of his own theatre.

THE SECOND PHASE OF STABILITY

THE PROLETARIAN CONDUCT OF THE THEATRE

CHAPTER XII

THE MASS BEHIND THE THEATRE

A. PROLET CULT. 1923-28

FROM 1923 to 1928 the New theatre passed through an astonishing stage of development owing to the constructive and creative activities of the intellectuals who were in charge of the principal playhouses. At the same time, equally important developments were taking place in the theatrical organisations under the charge of representatives of the proletariat and the toilers. The Mass had come to understand the theatre and its great importance to the common cause. Its level of taste was higher than immediately after the Revolution. It regarded the theatre as its own, and considered it was entitled to make its own claims upon it. So the theatre must serve the end in view, that of liberation from all past evil, it must be fully adapted to reflect existing conditions. The influence of this attitude was to be seen in the increase of revolutionary plays, and others reflecting economic conditions and the new social life. The new direction taken by, for instance, Tairov, Granovski and Stanislavski, was actually due to the pressure on the theatre by the toilers who owing to the rapid growth of cultural clubs were in a position to come together to discuss and criticise productions and, beyond this, to demand that plays reflecting the new spirit should be produced, and those that did not conform to the spirit, were compromising or reactionary, should be withdrawn. It was the

critics drawn from these club circles who detected the poison, as they called it, of compromise in the "Day of The Turbins," and clamoured for the withdrawal of the play. And it would have been withdrawn if anyone else than Stanislavski had produced it. It was they too who made matters uncomfortable for Meierhold when they accused him in 1928 of deserting his revolutionary principles by producing a species of comedy that did not continue the tragic revolutionary atmosphere of "Roar, China!"

CHAPTER XIII

GROWTH AND AMALGAMATION OF LEFT THEATRICAL ORGANISATIONS

I. PROLET CULT THEATRE

Rising out of this situation were two tendencies. One was the concentration of small theatrical organisations in big Labour theatres which enabled significant plays to have long runs, and gave birth to an arrangement by means of which the various Trades Unions could buy up performances on behalf of their branches. Such collective visits served the purpose of filling the theatre with audiences representing all the trades and industries to witness plays specially written or adapted to emphasise their new "rights," and it secured to these audiences a regular supply of tickets for the best plays. The other tendency was the specialisation already noted. Each theatre dealt with its own aspect of the broad Labour question.

Along with the establishment of new Labour theatres went the re-adjustment of one or two old ones. The foremost of these was the Proletcult whose developments since 1917 were considered in an early chapter of this book. In 1923 it began to search for a new direction away from experiment, such as the invention of the circus stage, to practical work in harmony with the demands of the Mass. Two or three years later it came into the main current of questions put to the theatre by the toilers, students and bolshevist employers, whose answers dictated policy. The content of its plays may be said to have consisted of answers to topical questions, designed in particular to safeguard the young toilers and students from the evil, and corrupt industrial and social elements with which a social order



"TROUADEK"

A mass scene planned for spectacular and æsthetic

still not completely purged of counter-revolutionary and reactionary tendencies faced them.

Two or three plays will suffice for illustrations.

1. "THE NOOSE," by Afinogenov. A picture of the life and morals of present-day bolshevist students. It tends to show that the student question has been and probably still is, one of special importance. Certain sections of the students have continued throughout to deviate towards new reactionary tendencies, such as the N.E.P. one, and the renewed assertion of a bourgeois ideology. They are apt to yield to temptations deliberately placed in their way by the old elements of society, and to be strongly influenced by bohemian environment.

2. "ACROSS THE ABYSS" (taken from Jack London). Presents the question of the assimilation of the intelligentsia by the proletariat. What is the proper place for the intelligentsia?

3. "THE PATH IS THE ROAD," by Krepusko. Illustrates the story of the growth of a young population to continue the work of the old revolutionaries, on the line of socialist construction.

4. "IN THE RANKS," by Afinogenov, dealing with the question of a "United Front," and "Rubber" by Byvoli, an illustration of Imperialist Colonial policy; internal questions are replaced with external or international ones.

Worthy of sociological note, is the fact that the Proletcult theatre has given special attention to the new factory, which it has put on the stage in its social aspect, and represented its new machinery for cultural and industrial development, while exposing those factors which have been working to undermine the new organisation.

2. THEATRE OF REVOLUTION

This theatre was formerly directed by Meierhold, but now is under entirely new management. It aims to deal with questions of special interest to revolutionary Labour, plays of revolt and reconciliation. It reflects Russian life after the Revolution.

It did so at first in an agitational way so as to rouse a revolutionary feeling in the public. Nowadays it is given up to the expression of the more stirring side of the new bolshevist life in order to urge Labour on towards reconstruction and constructional activities. Its particular public asks for information of reconciliation between peasants and workers, civic conditions, industrialisation of the country, socialistic construction and the fight against bureaucracy (satirically treated).

1. Its most often quoted play is "The End of Krivorilsk." This is a version of the popular subject of the bolshevising (and sovietisation) of the small town and village from the young toilers' point of view. We are shown a typical old provincial town which under the influence of the bolsheviks gradually throws off its Tsarist inheritance of neglect and decay and superstition, and assumes a new form as "Leninsk." The old bourgeoisie and the new young forces are thrown together which brings out what each is interested in; the old in tradition; the new in revolution. The play also contains new types of women who are associated with new ideals of family and social life.

2. Another typical piece is: "The Lake of Ozero," dealing with a capitalist State on an island, and revolutionists who organise a revolution.

3. THE TRADES UNION DRAMATIC THEATRE

This theatre specialises on Party questions and predominating industrial problems—economy, work, productivity, and so on. It attracts a mixed audience that influences the policy. This audience consists of workers and employers and toiling intelligentsia who put forth certain demands. Of late the demand has been for topical plays on all the current T.U. events.

1. "STORM," by Bill-Belotserkovski, has been one of its greatest successes. It is the story of how the rank and file members of the Party, who were simple toilers, shouldered the burden of the Civil War phase of the Revolution during 1918-20.

How the anti-bolshevists tried to get into their midst to work harm, but were defeated. It is a play presented without any trimmings and in such a realistic way that it appeals irresistibly to the peculiar T.U. audience.

2. "CALM," by the same author. This is designed to carry the story of "Storm" into the period succeeding the Civil War one, when the N.E.P. became the storm centre.

3. "1881." Here we have the "People's Will" Party fighting Alexander II.

4. "CEMENT," by Gladkov. Woven into these plays that deal with phases of the Revolution and the Civil War, and the succeeding period of reconstruction are many subjects of sociological interest. Thus "Cement" which is concerned mainly with the heroics of production, and seeks to tell the audience how to increase productivity, is also an interesting study of the new conjugal relations. We have the return of the Red soldier to find his wife an active public worker and no longer sharing his ideas. And we have the struggle between the conservative husband and the radical wife which ends in the latter becoming a woman of October.

4. THE MASS THEATRE. 1923-28

In the second period the Small Mass theatre underwent important changes. As already noted thousands of little theatrical organisations sprang up immediately after the Revolution. A large number of these became caught up by the cultural club movement which spread all over Russia and had the result of bringing the toilers and peasants alike together in centres of instruction and recreation. Many others were caught up by the movement towards the concentration of Labour theatrical activities in big theatres.

The Big Mass theatre likewise changed under the touch of new influences and revised opinion. It was recognised, for example, that the roofed-in theatre was not fitted for mass performances on a large scale. Lunacharski went so far as to

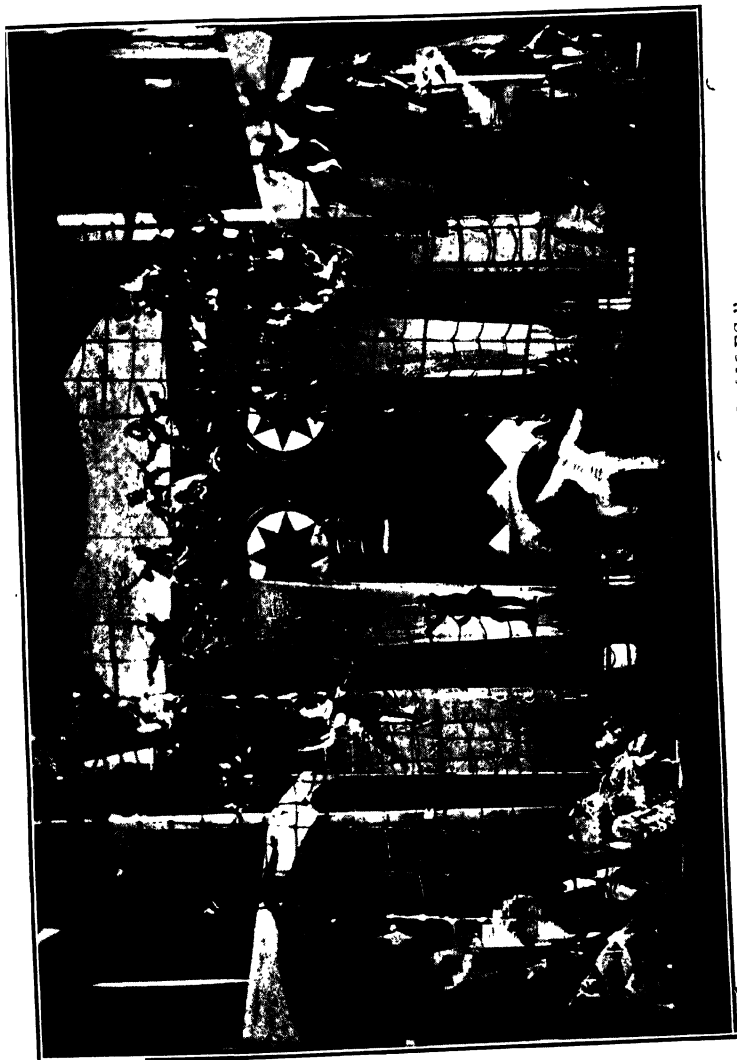
express the opinion that the stage of this theatre was more suited to individual than to mass expression, except on a very small scale. Both "Storm" and "Calm" were called mass plays, but as performed at the Trades Union theatre, they did not invite the co-operation of big crowds. The term mass may have meant that some of the common folk took part in a performance. To-day the Mass theatre moves slowly in the direction of demonstrations, carnivals, mass-choirs, parades, May Day, 25th October and other celebrations. In all this there is the old theatricalisation of human life, but it is more like pageantry than the mass political mystery plays that used to be performed by 100,000 and more untrained actors.

A new feature has recently made its appearance in the theatricalisation of big and sensational court trials, like that of the German engineers who were accused of sabotage in the Donetz Basin.

5. THE BLUE BLOUSE

The desire to stir the population, even in the remotest hamlets, to a sense of the meaning of the new social life, and the need, nature and value of its co-operation in it, has called forth more travelling organisations than one. Whether or no they are meant to take the place of the old propaganda train fully equipped with printing press, library, kinema and theatre, that used to rove all over Russia, is not clear. But it is certain they are undergoing remarkable expansion, and have bred imitations in countries outside Russia.

The most important organisation of the kind is "The Blue Blouse," or "Living Newspaper" as it is sometimes called. It was founded by some young students in 1920 and three years later was taken up by the State Institute of Journalists. Its object was to "perform" the newspaper in villages and small towns. It takes its name partly from this, and partly from the workmen's blouses worn by the company. But the blouses are not all blue. They are of different colours and ingeniously



made costumes are slipped over them and used both back and front. These and other means are adapted to give the entertainment a light vaudeville character. Troupes of about twenty men and women comprising actors and actresses who are also acrobats, athletes, dancers, and musicians visit the factory and other theatrical clubs where they give performances free and without any assistance from the Government. Their work is in intention social and political. There are between 5 and 6,000 troupes incorporating 100,000 players with a repertory numbering 2,000 items.

6. THE TRAM THEATRE

A very instructive feature of the Left Wing of the New theatre is the birth and growth of a theatrical organisation of revolt. It is known as the Tram theatre and was started in 1922 by 24 young toilers (not children) who were opposed to all other theatrical systems in Moscow and Leningrad and were for no restraints in the matter of repudiation. They expressed themselves determined to carve out something of their own in revolutionary plays and political satires. They agreed that their theatre should be a theatre of the barricade of the new social life. It was to throw up defences against tendencies which threatened to undermine that life. The N.E.P. was largely responsible for their thought and action. They saw something menacing in it. They went thoroughly to work, admitted no professionals, wrote their own plays and acted them and gradually built up an efficient and spontaneous organisation that takes first rank to-day.

There are two things of importance to be noted. One is the disposition of the young toilers in Russia to decide what they think is best for their elders; and the other, the demonstration of the ability of such young toilers who have had no experience of theatrical organisation and playmaking, to promote a fairly powerful and extending organisation, and to become efficient playwrights without the usual aids.

PART IV

PROCESS D. THE COMPLETE THEATRE

THIRD PHASE OF STABILITY

THE THEATRE TO-DAY

CHAPTER XIV

(A) WINTER, 1926-7. The matters discussed in the phase one and two of Stability bring the building of the New theatre down to the Spring of 1927. But in order to conclude some of the surveys of achievement, productions have been carried down to 1928. The preceding two chapters have dealt with the general approach to Meierhold's position, the closing in of the parts of theatre towards socialist unity, and the degree of unity attained. The theatre has been shown handling one subject, the idea of liberation as it appears in conflict, or class-struggle, construction and creation. And the component parts of the theatre have been shown specialising off to deal adequately with the particular questions comprised in the general subject. Sociological expression has been to some extent impeded and falsified by the spirit of compromise active in some plays like "The Day of the Turbins." Such compromise has caused severe friction between the uncompromising Left and the Die-Hard Right. But the outstanding feature has been the culmination of a movement on the part of the proletarians to get behind the theatre in order to dictate its policy and to compel the intellectuals to work in accordance with the strict needs of the common people. It may be said that the Spring of 1927 brings to a close the domination of the intellectual leaders of the theatre. Henceforth they must take their orders from the theatrically-hungry Mass.

CHAPTER XV

(B) **SUMMER AND AUTUMN, 1927.** In the Autumn of this year there came a marked change. Home and Foreign Affairs reaching into 1928 conspired to put a serious check on the advance of the theatre. The Trotsky Opposition. The Raid on Arcos. England's Break with Russia. Rakovski's recall from Paris. The assassination of the bolshevist ambassador at Warsaw. The presumed preparations by England for war on Russia. The revival of the 1918 period of terror and reprisals. The consequent shootings in Russia and the unfavourable impression produced by them on foreign nations. The appearance of bolshevist representatives at the Geneva Conference on Disarmament. The refusal to abandon the principle of bolshevist socialism. The growth of the Trotsky Opposition and subsequent exile of Trotsky and leading members of the Opposition by those who sought to increase the power of the peasants over the intellectuals for the purpose of turning Russia into a working model of a bolshevist State governed solely by bolshevist principles. All these events were bound to affect a theatre which had grown in ten years into a highly-sensitised instrument of interpretation and representation of political, economic and social conditions.

One saw everywhere the increase of nervous tension, the return of the shadow of fear, the re-appearance of a restlessness that had marked pre-stability days. But the fear and apprehension were not the same as in the early days of the Revolution. In those days the theatre was a makeshift fighting machine; now it was a fully-organised and efficient one with a repertory capable of sustaining the spirit of the common people during this fresh period of unrest. Plays both old and new were produced reflecting the situation. A full list is given in the appendices.

CHAPTER XVI

WINTER, 1927. A kind of climax was reached in November with the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the bolshevist revolution. There was a week of festival. Foreign guests came from 45 countries, the streets and public buildings were illuminated, the mood of the people changed, and the theatre joined in the celebration to tell them about their ten years' gains and losses, what they did in the Revolution and Civil War, what they had done towards laying the new economic foundation, and what they would be likely to do when the present crisis had passed.

About two dozen plays were specially performed on this occasion, including some very important new ones, like "The Armoured Train," at the Moscow Art Academic theatre, a picture of the war against Kolchak by the Siberian peasants. "The Break," "The Taking of the Bastille," "A Window in the Country" (Meierhold), a picture of the bio-mechanic soviet country life. "1917," the bolshevist revolution.

On the whole, during the latter half of 1927 and the beginning of 1928 plays revealed a change of content. Previously, in calmer days, it was possible to divide them into two classes; those that were concerned with the revolutionary and mass sides of the social upheaval, and with clearing out the undesirable elements of the new society; and those that reflected the better side of the world without the theatre, and expressed and emphasised the happier experiences, the emotions and the reactions of the common folk to the great change which Russia was undergoing.

The new content, or rather the old one, since it was made up of ingredients of contemporary theatrical history, was one of

defiance and exultation. Its exhibition reminded one of the behaviour of an army that has won a considerable victory, has consolidated its gains and, in the face of a fresh attack, is content to review the circumstances under which it has reached security. Thus the plays and spectacles performed during the November celebrations reflected a period of storm and stress, held up the theatre to view in fighting and revolutionary attitude, but apparently rather to remind the Mass of what they had gone through, of what they had undertaken and succeeded in, than to terrify them with a picture of what they might be compelled to go through again. In any case, the whole of the Celebrations had, in spite of ghastly reminders of the past, more of an air of victory than of defeat.

CHAPTER XVII

A BRIEF REVIEW OF 1928

A REVIEW of 1928 strengthens the conclusion that the Russian theatre has definitely been re-shaped (or to continue the analogy adopted in this book, rebuilt) to fulfil its proper vital function towards man, and the Russian people in particular. On the whole, it was a restless year, full of events that were making history. At Home there was the Left danger arising from Trotskyism. The Right danger arising from the peasants, the question of food, the economic pressure, the growth of the rich individualistic peasants, the war of Kulacs v. Selkors, in which the former incited the peasants to rise and kill the representatives of the Government. But against serious internal troubles were to be set more favourable external events. The different phases of the Peace talk at Geneva—complete disarmament; peace pact; partial disarmament—brought Russia into Europe as a delegate again. The matter of foreign concessions, and the sign of a break in the American financial blockade, had a re-assuring effect.

This loosening of the strain caused by the 1927 circumstances was reflected by the theatre in various ways. For instance there was the release of new bolshevist theatrical companies for tours abroad. By "new companies" is meant companies that had not left Russia since the Revolution. Two of these were the State Jewish Academic theatre and the Vakhtangov theatre, which made their way through Europe to Paris, each playing a limited and carefully-selected repertory. They were very well received, especially by Germany. It is noteworthy that Germany has always been the first to receive and intelli-

gently to understand the new Russian companies and their work. Not so much can be said for other countries. The critics in Paris, especially the English ones, have not known what to make of them, and their interpretations have been mainly nonsense.

In Russia the theatre at first made progress and there was a fair output of new plays. New novelist-playwrights were pressing to the front. The Moscow Art theatre produced "Untilovsk," by Leonid Leonov, a young Russian novelist. Untilovsk is the name of a town in Siberia. The theme is exile. Also, "The Defrauder," by V. Kataev, another young novelist.

But towards the Autumn economic troubles arose. One result was that Meierhold went to Paris for a holiday, and to consider his next phase of action. Subsequently he returned to Moscow, where forecasts of his future are numerous and vague. He has recently produced at his theatre Maiakovski's "Klop" ("The Bug"). This insect symbolises social neglect, ignorance and insanitary conditions to-day, and their removal by scientific knowledge during the next 50 years.

СВОДНАЯ АФНИША ГОСУДАРСТВЕННЫХ АКАДЕМИЧЕСКИХ И ГОСУДАРСТВЕННЫХ ТЕАТРОВ №10

ТЕАТРЫ	Среда 2	Четверг 3	Пятница 4	Суббота 5	Воскр. 6	Вторник 8	Среда 9	Примеч.
 БОЛЬШОЙ Экспериментальный	ЛЕБЕДИНОЕ ОЗЕРО	КНЯЗЬ ИГОРЬ	ЕВГЕНИЙ ОНЕГИН	Аида	10-й ЛЕТИО ОКТЯБРЯ	ГОСУДАРСТВЕННЫЙ СПЕКТАКЛ	КРАСНЫЙ МАК	
 МАЛЫЙ Малого театра	ДЕМОН	РУСАЛКА	РУССКАЯ КОМЕДИЯ	МОЦАРТ И САЛЕРИ	УРАТ НАСТАЛ	1917-й ГОД	ФЛЕНГО	
 МОСКОВСКИЙ ХУДОЖЕСТВЕННЫЙ АКАДЕМИЧЕСКИЙ ТЕАТР	СЕСТРЫ ЖЕРАР	БАВАРСКАЯ ПЕТРОВНА	НА ДНЕ	СЕСТРЫ ЖЕРАР	ПРОЩАНИЕ С НАМИ	ПРОЩАНИЕ С НАМИ	ПРОЩАНИЕ С НАМИ	
 КАМЕРНЫЙ ТЕАТР	ДЕНЬ И НОЧЬ	ДЕНЬ И НОЧЬ	АВТЯГОВА	ЛЮБОВЬ И НЕЖЕЛАННЫЙ ГЕСТИ	ДЕНЬ И НОЧЬ	ДЕНЬ И НОЧЬ	ДЕНЬ И НОЧЬ	
 ВСЕХОВДА Евг. Вахтангова	ЛЕС	ЛЕС	РЫЧИ, КИТАЙ!	ЛЕС	ОКНО В ДЕРЕВНЮ	ОКНО В ДЕРЕВНЮ	ОКНО В ДЕРЕВНЮ	
 ЕВРЕЙСКИЙ ТЕАТР	ВРЕДНЫЙ ЭЛЕМЕНТ	ВРЕДНЫЙ ЭЛЕМЕНТ	КИНО-РОМАН	КИНО-РОМАН	КИНО-РОМАН	КИНО-РОМАН	КИНО-РОМАН	
 МУЗЫКАЛЬНАЯ СТУДИЯ	БОГЕМА	ЕВГЕНИЙ ОНЕГИН	—	—	—	—	—	
 СТУДИЯ-ТЕАТР	ОТКРЫТИЕ СЕЗОНА	ОТКРЫТИЕ СЕЗОНА	ОТКРЫТИЕ СЕЗОНА	ОТКРЫТИЕ СЕЗОНА	ОТКРЫТИЕ СЕЗОНА	ОТКРЫТИЕ СЕЗОНА	ОТКРЫТИЕ СЕЗОНА	
 ЦИРК	ЕЖЕДНЕВНО	ЕЖЕДНЕВНО	ЕЖЕДНЕВНО	ЕЖЕДНЕВНО	ЕЖЕДНЕВНО	ЕЖЕДНЕВНО	ЕЖЕДНЕВНО	

А Moscow theatrical document of historical importance. The Poster Program plays performed at the State Academic and State theatres during the "Ten Years" Week, November 2 - 9, 1928. Pieces included in the Moscow Art Academic theatre are "Tsar Feodor" (1808); "Blue Bird" (1908); "The Day of the Turbins" (1921).

PROCESS E. THE THEATRE OF TO-MORROW

THE FOURTH PHASE OF STABILITY

CHAPTER XVIII

I. IMMEDIATE

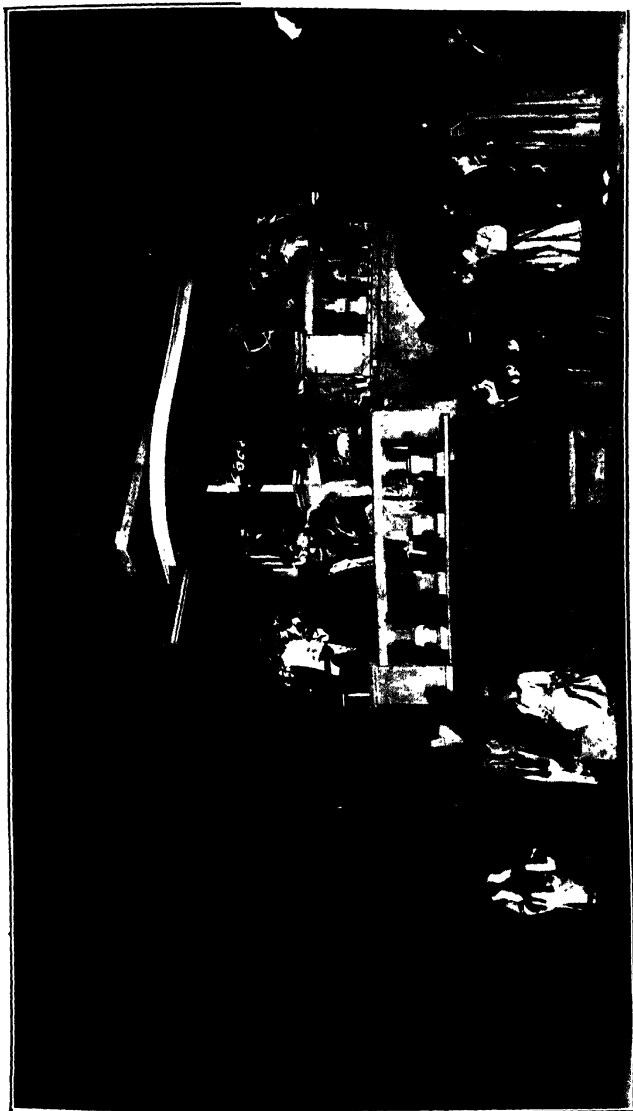
It is not easy to forecast the path the New theatre will take to-morrow. The theatre has gained a unique position among the theatres of the world, but it is not an unassailable one. It has the weakness of its strength. It is a powerful instrument of interpretation and representation of social life, but its advance depends on the conditions of that life. An immediate improvement in Russia would mean an immediate gain by the theatre in having to reflect that improvement. This question of improvement is no longer a political one but a financial one. To-day Russia's fate is in the hands of business men. To-morrow it will be the same. The people are no longer interested in politics, they are touched by cultural and scientific education, a reaction to the more spiritual aspect of the new social life is taking place and with it is arising a desire for the reflection of the next stage of the rebuilding of Russia, the truly constructive and creative one. The days of the strain of strifes is surely passing.

The present situation in the theatre is a promising one for to-morrow. The theatre is established and unified on a new basis. It is a functional theatre, and its vital social function is generally recognised. Its new problems, and its developments, have been dictated by collective necessities, and will, under certain conditions, continue to be. Social interpretation and illumination have throughout been a basic principle of theatrical policy, and will remain so given favourable conditions. Every

advance towards the full attainment of its true social purpose will come to be judged by a sociological criteria. The theatre will, in fact, during its career in the immediate future tend to become more and more a sociological one, a delicate instrument of sociological expression. On this ground there is no reason why it should not seek and attain rapid extension abroad seeing that sociological expression has entered the theatres outside Russia but needs practical example to enable it to establish itself there as a theatrical system of interpretation and representation. But the probability of the invasion of Russia by foreign influences must not be lost sight of. If an invasion of individualistic tendencies does take place, then there is the danger that they may invade the theatre and greatly affect its content and form.

2. THE FUTURE.

But there is room for speculation on a favourable development along the lines laid down. Continued stability, settlement of the financial problem, recognition, and a continued successful pursuit by the whole people of scientific and art culture, might work wonders. I say recognition, although I think a little more comparative isolation would serve to strengthen those institutions like the New theatre that have arisen out of it and therefore bear their own character. It is reasonable to believe that as the people become more refined the theatre will take on that more spiritual appearance which is perhaps its proper appearance. As the people rise, as they become in turn scientifically educated, so theatrical reflection will pass from the laying of the foundation of the new social pyramid to the reflection of scientific levels representing the stages of the application of scientific principles of unity animating the thought and action of the age. By such stages expression will rise till it becomes the reflection of the new faith of mankind, the faith that must emerge from the exaltation and worship of pure science, a kind of deification of science that is already apparent in Russia to-day.



"LUBOV YAROVAIA"

... that this former Imperial theatre is committed to

Under the necessity of reflecting the rebirth of an imaginative and what is loosely termed a spiritual state of mind, the theatre must assume the form of a Church no longer on the old Middle Age theological plan, but a Church to which Man may go for initiation into the truth of his self evolving on a set of principles provided by the continuous study of evolution, and of his heaven on earth or wherever his study of evolution may place it. Perhaps this worship of pure science, which is about to replace worship dictated by theology, may lead to a union of science and righteousness (right thinking and living) which would seem to be the best ingredients for making a tolerable world.

Such appears to be the logical evolution of the New Russian theatre under the most favourable circumstances. The theatre is now organised to follow the people. If they evolve to higher levels the theatre must take the same road till it arrives at its highest level—a spiritual one—which may be, for all we know, its fundamental one.

PART V

THE TWO AUXILIARIES

(A) KINEMA

(B) RADIO

CHAPTER XIX

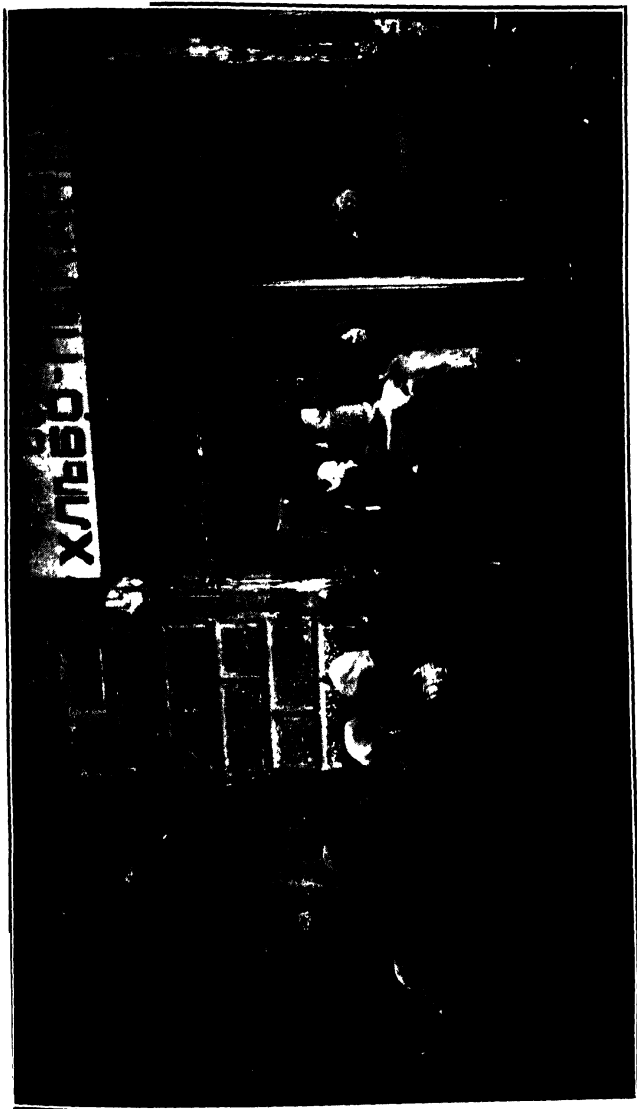
THE MECHANICAL AGE OF THE THEATRE AND THE MECHANICAL PERIL

THIS section is not an exhaustive study of the new spirit in the Russian Kinema and Radio. The term spirit comprehends the new purpose, function, arrangement, which have marked the growth and development of these two important instruments of interpretation during the past seven or eight years. It is intended to be an outline sketch of how since the days of the Revolution, cinematographic and wireless expression has become a factor in political, social and theatrical affairs in Russia. Among the proposals of the bolshevists, when they came into power, it will be remembered, was one that all public means of expression, like the theatre, should be exclusively relegated to the State to be held in trust for, and to be employed by, the common folk for militant and national construction purposes and those of solving the new problems of collective necessities. In 1920 or thereabout, just when the Kinema was passing from the first period of its history to the beginning of the second; when the old age of pioneering was yielding to the new one of astonishing commercial competition and technical advance, which was to see a great war begun between mighty kinema corporations for the domination of the world market, the Russian kinema was reborn, under an arrangement whereby it became an organic part of the people with the aim of presenting not pictures of base feeling and sentiment taken at random and without a general plan or policy save that of profit-making, but pictures illustrating a general and national policy of attack, defence, reconstruction, construction and creation. Philo-

sophically, it was an arrangement securing to the film a definite content. For the first time in its history the film was given a sociological story to tell. Thus while the kinema outside Russia was rapidly exhausting its stock of artificial and sickening sentiment, and preying more and more on the theatre for sustenance, and, on the whole, heading steadily and rapidly for bankruptcy (which the "talkie" has only temporarily not permanently averted); that inside Russia was being fostered on a life-centred subject which while taking it further and further away from bankruptcy, also took it out of the theatre not to act separately as a thing apart but as a collaborator undertaking to do those very things which the theatre, because of its form and limitations, is unable to do. It promised in fact to shoulder some of the responsibilities of the theatre without interfering with its indispensable birthrights.

That arrangement has remained undisturbed throughout. Content, or story, of national memory and aspiration, of intense love or hate, human, heroic, romantic, sentimental, social or sociological, has come to be first, while technique has come to serve it by seeking to raise it to the highest interpretative power. I say seeking because Russian technique has some distance to go as yet before it reaches an indisputable height, whence it can wield a world-wide influence. This much is admitted by the Russians themselves who are still leaning heavily on Germany for instruction and aid in technique that shall give their pictures that something which business men and intellectuals alike think is contained in the vague and meaningless term "artistic."

In 1923 I published a sketch of the Russian kinema as it then appeared. Quite recently a big film director observed to me that the view I then took that the Russian film would eventually dominate the market of the world, was a little premature, but was now within sight of being realised. He was thinking of the sudden interest of the big American directors in the Russian film, and, in particular, of the visit of Schenck, one of the dominating figures of the American film industry, to



"DETY BOORY"

A super-historical film depicting historical events of the War and the 1917 revolutionary period in terms of contemporary life. The film shows the revolutionary Middle-class storming the bread riots and the revolutionary Middle-class storming the bread riots and the revolutionary Middle-class storming the bread riots.

Moscow to examine Russia film attributes and "box-office" attractions.

The story I told in 1923, of the history, concept, organisation and subject and technique of the Russian kinema is the story materially unaltered of that kinema to-day. The main facts may be restated without seriously suggesting that there has been no advance. On the contrary there has been a very great deal, but it has been mainly in the direction of the fullest realisation of the bolshevist idea of "The Kinema for All"; of unity and collaboration with the theatre; and of setting the fashion in the Western European intelligentsia circles of praising the technique of the Russian film sky high and, at the same time, of writing it to death. This tendency among the self-elected experts to accept the Russian film as the last word in technical and "art" expression, and on this account a masterpiece to be exhibited freely in all countries, may be seen in the little journals that are beginning to make their appearance. Therein are gathered the elite addressing Technique with ecstasy and putting forth their best efforts to ignore Content altogether. To them, "Story does not matter." . . . "The technique of the camera, the art of the actors, the brain of the producer have combined to create an artistic master." Could anything be more stupid? The story is responsible for the rest.

This social policy and unity of purpose which have marked the new Russian kinema from the start, and are so lacking in the kinema in other countries, is due, I think, to the recognition by the bolshevist Government of the importance of the Kinema not only to the expression of the liberation motive, but as a mechanical tool forged by the mechanical age upon which we have entered. Further that it is in the misapplication of this and kindred tools that the mechanical peril which some writers see and dread, actually exists. The peril is one of separation and ruinous competition instead of unity and collaboration.

To-day we find the Theatre living in an age of scientific thought and activity. It is face to face with the rapid invention

of mechanical devices—photographic colour, stereoscopy, mechanical sound, television, wireless and the rest—all seeking to deprive it of its birthrights, of the use of its own legitimate objects and agents of expression. There is the present conspiracy to rob it of sound and colour. A climax was reached a few months ago when the kinemas extended their illegitimate function so far into the Theatre that they became talking machines. Thus circumstances have arisen which threaten seriously to curtail the privileges naturally conferred on the Theatre for the interpretation and representation of the drama, and unless the encroachments made upon the liberty of the Theatre by the new mechanical devices and the true relationship between the Theatre and such devices are recognised at once, the Theatre must inevitably enter upon a renewed struggle for liberty. Such a struggle between the Theatre and its rivals, (for so, at present, we must call the kinema, the wireless and television), must have a disastrous effect upon the Theatre at a moment when for the first time for centuries it is beginning to renew and fulfil its vital function for man. The futility of the effort to compete with the new mechanical forces and the monopolies to which they are giving birth, has already taken possession of the minds of some of the best workers in the Theatre, and it is becoming more and more apparent that they will give up the fight unless means are forthcoming to prevent the defeat and the disaster which they honestly believe the Theatre is about to sustain.

The proper way to avoid the evil effects of the rivalry is to kill the rivalry at the outset. The big three powerful instruments of expression and communication must be regarded as auxiliaries not rivals of the Theatre, and while being organised to fulfil their own particular functions towards society, should be brought to unite with the Theatre to fulfil a general function, that of giving the theatricalisation of life the highest, most unified and most complete expression and interpretation.

They could, if properly handled, be made to relieve the



S. M. EISENSTEIN

A prominent bolshevist film producer. He stands for the destruction of civilisation and the advanced state of human society, a civilisation based on individualism and private property, but on collectivism and the destruction of private property. His films exhibit the Mass challenging the old established authority ("Potemkin") or the Mass laying the economic foundations of an advanced state of society as the bolshevists see it, "The General Policy" (or General Line as it is miscalled). The latter illustrates the essentials of bolshevist civilisation and the cultivation of a new sense of economic values.

Theatre of some of the cumber and burdens under which centuries of theory and practice have almost buried it. In its single state it has become overcrowded, clogged up with tasks and duties imposed upon it by ideals, ideas, systems and methods, philosophical, literary, moral, æsthetic, scientific, social and technical, which it cannot possibly fulfil in a sensible way. Look at the heavy burdens laid upon it by the many and varied theories of the representation of Shakespeare. The question of the adequate representation of Shakespeare has never been satisfactorily settled, in spite of the increased size of theatre buildings and the increased use of unwieldy machinery. The only influence of these changes in the size and apparatus of the stage on the problem of the representation of Shakespeare has been that of complicating it and making it appear hopeless, incapable of being solved. The larger the stage space the more ridiculous the mass effects. All the ingenuity in the world cannot put life into the stage representation of great battles, mighty hosts moving across immense spaces, the grandeur of enormous moving imagery, run by a Shakespeare or a Milton into an epic and heroic mould. Alone the Kinema can give vivid realisation to mass movement of the kind.

In the past the Theatre has completely failed to represent mankind on a great, heroic, romantic or vividly realistic scale for its own enlightenment. Now comes a new Epoch to set it even a heavier task. It is nothing less than the interpretation of the function of science in human life, of the great social problems of to-day and to-morrow dictated by collective necessities, the task, in fact, of reflecting the social plan in a new form, and of showing how the new social organisation may get itself fulfilled. The cardinal constructive principle of the plan is mass-production—mass philosophy, sentiment, action, necessary to prepare the people as a whole to undertake the mass work of the epoch. Owing to its limitations the Theatre cannot fulfil such a gigantic task alone. It needs a partner. What more suitable one could there be than the Kinema with its all-seeing

eye. Properly conceived, the Kinema is a machine for seeing, one capable of catching and interpreting and illuminating the great mass movements—the losses and gains, the analyses and syntheses, the struggles and triumphs on a big canvas, of society moving forward and upward. The function of the Kinema in human life is to visualise hosts in action, destroying or creating. The function of the Theatre is to illuminate the springs of action that set these big masses in motion. The latter is concerned with symbols—symbols let us say of Life and Death, of Good and Evil; the former with the malignant and destructive, and good passions let loose on a majestic scale. Take the long and unending struggle for the liberation of mankind from evil. There is the hatching of the plot, the pauses in the plot during which mankind recovers from victory or defeat and hatches fresh plots and counter-plots, makes new plans, counts gains and losses, expresses the personified principles of Evil or Good. All this is for the Theatre. Then there are the outbursts of war and revolution, the unrelieved scenes of lust of power or the exhilarating scenes of the collective effort to secure the fruits of victory, the mass personification of the principle of Good or Evil. All this is for the Kinema.

Lest this division of duties appear extravagant, let me say that it has been made in Russia. There for five years, at least, the authorities have been both theatricalising and filming the ages-long struggle for liberation, the struggle for deliverance from evil and the attainment of the common good (to-day as the bolshevists see these things). Take the New theatre and kinema. Compare their work. Put the two parts together and what do you find? The whole has a definite plan or purpose. Whether it is intentional or not, whether these two great instruments were deliberately organised to collaborate with and to supplement each other's work, or whether the mass expression possibilities of the Kinema were seized upon instinctively by those who wanted to represent human actions on a vast scale, and to relieve the theatre of one of its heaviest burdens, I am



"POLIKUSHKA"

Taken from Tolstoi's story of that name. It is a picture of social conditions 100 years ago, and exhibits the peasants as an illiterate, drunken, ignorant class under the sway of the middle-class. The drunken, thieving, yet conscientious Polikushka (played by F. M. Moskvin of the Moscow Art Theatre) is seen, in this illustration, about to commit suicide by hanging himself from a tree. The picture was made in 1922 and is the first

unable to say. But the fact remains that the plan and plot shared by the two are there. The common toilers are the hero of the plot (according to Marx-Lenin theory). They are the Angels who, in ages past, were chained to Demons whose malignity is pictured in the usurpation of superhuman cruelty and cunning and boundless resources. The chief incidents of the plot are the attempts to throw off the chains.

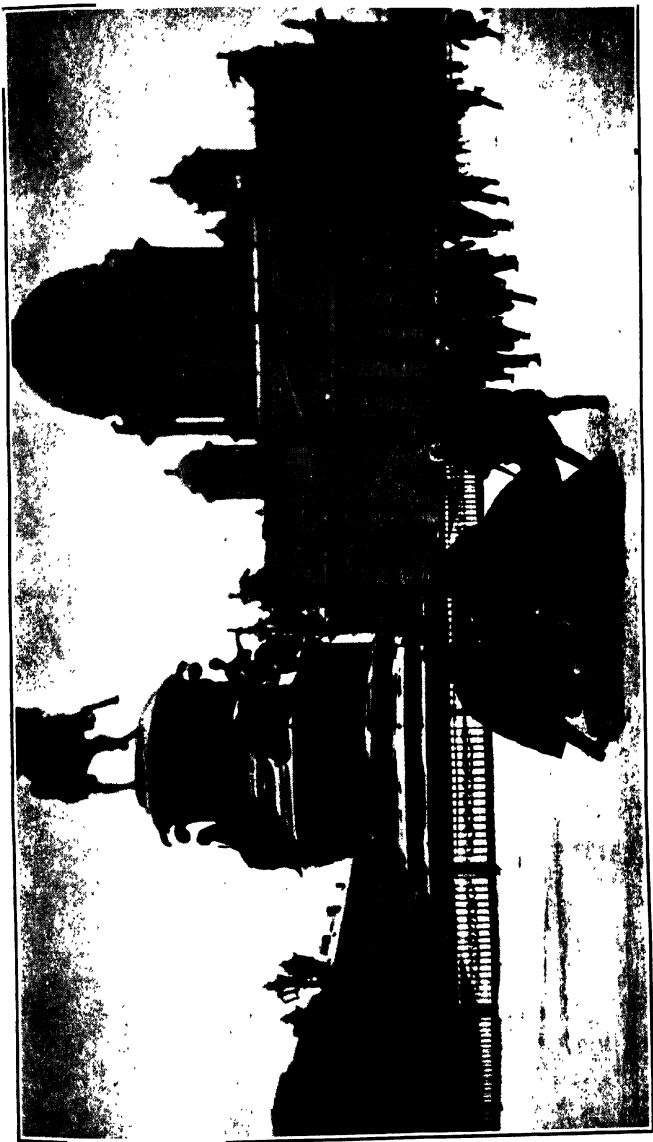
When the Revolution came the New theatre was called upon to undertake the task of representing the numerous incidents, historical and contemporary, of this long struggle for liberation with its culmination in the overthrow of let us say the autocratic Demons and the rise to power of the bolshevist (or, in a sense, democratic) Angels. The result was that the roofed-in theatre being unable to accommodate warring hosts within its traditional space bounded by four walls, was compelled to expand into the open, and so gave birth to an offspring in the shape of the Mass theatre. The business of this Mass theatre was to supplement the work of its parent by staging in the open the great political mysteries, a name given to representations of mimic warfare on a vast scale in which hundreds of thousands of untrained actors took part and sides.

Then came the rebirth of the kinema, the instant recognition by the men who understand and see of its wonderful mass possibilities, and the consequent transference to the film of that part of the work of the New theatre which had been undertaken by the Mass theatre. So both the New theatre and the New kinema came to reflect human actions, and not separately and at random, as in countries outside Russia, but according to a common definite plan and purpose. The kinema took over the vast and numerous episodes of war, while the theatre was concerned with the more peaceful incidents. A definition of War and Peace is necessary. By war is meant class-war, like that responsible for the revolutionary movements prior to 1923, and social war, that is, war on social disease, darkness and ignorance, like that which has been waged since 1923. By Peace (that is,

peaceful incidents) is meant the pauses in the conflict when there is a gathering of strength, the discussion of laws and principles, ways and means of attack, defence, security and the maturing of the general plan to carry it to its logical end.

Let us see how the incidents and episodes of the plot are shared out. One or two illustrations will suffice. Within the past five years the Russian State Kinema organisation has specialised on a new mammoth mass film representing the historical and contemporary struggle for present power, its attainment and the use to which it is being put and will be put when bolshevist Russia is quite free to go full speed ahead. Foremost among these mammoth films are "The Decembrists" ("The Decabrists," depicting the rising in December, 1825); "Potemkin" (a revolutionary episode of 1905); and "The General Policy" (a reconstruction film begun in 1926 and likely to be exhibited in 1929). The "Decembrists" rising was influenced by the French revolution operating on the intelligentsia. Among the latter were leaders of the army who, finding the political principles and ideals for which they had recently fought still unrecognised by the Tsar and his advisers, together with nobles and other members of the aristocracy, formed "circles" and decided to vent their indignation, and if possible realise the objects of their insurrectionary organisation by active means. The film gives the broad effects of the subsequent outbreak and its suppression. There are mass scenes like that of the ball given by Alexander I.; and the massacre of the Guards in Senate Square in St. Petersburg on December 14th, 1825. Such scenes the theatre could not adequately represent. Two versions of this outbreak were produced by the Moscow Art Academic theatre between 1925 and 1928. These served to make the more intimate principles and ideals—the high idealism and the motive of self-sacrifice—better understood than an historical action film could do.

"Potemkin" belongs to the tendency class of mass film upon which Eisenstein, its producer, is specialising. He has



"DETU BOORY"

Historical film dealing with events during the War and the 1917 All-Russia Revolution. It shows that the War was largely the cause of that Revolution. The scene is a fine example of the bolshevist film setting. It represents the Varovskiy Square, one of the most beautiful squares in Leningrad. In the background is the magnificent Isaac's Cathedral, one of the great historical values of Leningrad, but it throws into relief

taken an historical class revolt tendency, collected all the subject matter which together gives the tendency, put it on board a cruiser manned by sailors, or representatives of the common folk, as a concentrated means of expressing the plot and action. He has allowed some of the action to flow overboard and involve the Mass on shore, so as to illustrate his theory that the Mass must be drawn into the action of the episode represented and thus faced with actual problems and led to assist in their solution. By means of the film he has been able to treat his subject in the grand heroic manner. What has he left for the theatre? As far as I know there is not a "Potemkin" play, but I think that one is on the way. The film needs a play to handle the more intimate historical and philosophical sides of its subject. More light is needed to be thrown on the forces and circumstances leading up to the climax reached when the sailors revolt against a piece of stinking meat which they are expected to eat. The rotten meat no doubt symbolises conditions that the film suggests but cannot explain, and that deserve to be known. "Potemkin" needs a play to illuminate its intimate meanings and significance, just as "The Man Who Was Thursday," a play adapted from the novel of that name, requires a film to represent its broader aspects. This play-revue is, as already mentioned, intended to be an expression of the philosophy of collective life. It is a study in urbanism, which is the organisation of the functions and forms of collective life. As produced it presented an outline of the organisation of such life in Russia, not conditioned by æsthetics but belonging to the functional order. The theatre could do no more, even aided by the most remarkable ingenuity, than give the barest analysis and synthesis, a mere sketch of this vast subject, leaving all the big details and the mass effects to be filled in by another medium. What it leaves for the film to represent is suggested by the German film "Berlin," that symphony of a city's "soul"; by the concluding scenes of "The End of St. Petersburg," expressing a civic or urban transformation that forms an introduction to the newest urbanism; and by the magnificent

reconstruction processes exhibited by the big Sov-Kino gazette film, "Soviet Steps."

"The General Policy," the policy of economic reconstruction said to be Eisenstein's biggest picture, is completed by the species of plays produced at the Trades Union theatre, Moscow, which deal with the more intimate problems and facts of the philosophy, true politics, and true economics of the subject of the film. Thus we have the theatre, on its part, and in its own way, dealing with the questions of hard work, of saving, of increased production, collectivism of agriculture, matters of industrial and agricultural attack, defence, security, everything that, in fact, concerns the trades unionist within the field of the general policy of the bolshevist Government's reconstruction scheme. To take only one process with which the T.U. theatre could theatricalise and the film illustrate on a large scale, there is the process known as "rationalisation." The term means the amalgamation, say, of factories that produce one commodity, for the purpose of attaining utmost efficiency, avoiding waste, concentration, reduction of prices, increase of wages, increased production and other advantages. It was shown at the commencement of this book that when the Russian playhouses were nationalised they were also rationalised. They were brought together for the purpose of producing one "commodity," the idea of liberation which was to be distributed for general consumption. Then came the process, carried out by the theatrical directors, of scrapping the old machinery, eliminating waste in acting, and the production of essential expression by the aid of simplification and concentration, and, in short, the attempt by doing everything needful to put the new spirit or purpose on the market in the most efficient and up-to-date manner at the lowest price.

Then there is the Last of the Autocratic Tsars series,—Paul I., Alexander I., Nicholas I., Alexander II., Alexander III., Nicholas II, comprising subjects suitable for complimentary plays and films.



TH DECEMBRISTS

I need not pursue these comparisons and analogies any further. A long list of plays and films is available for comparison if more proof is required that the Russian theatre and kinema are, in a general way, complimentary. They share between them a sociological content of national importance without infringing on the rights of each other. It may be contended that the introduction of a cinematographic stage to the New theatre was a direct infringement of the rights of the kinema, just as the American "talkie" is a direct infringement of the rights of the theatre. But the cinematographic stage was only an expedient for getting theatricalised speed and variety that must accompany a vivid realisation of contemporary human life. Probably it is but a temporary expedient that will pass as the theatre and kinema become thoroughly adjusted to the exercise of their own functions. In any case it cannot handle mass and it forms a subject for discussion to-morrow.

Though, as I have said, it is not clear whether the collaboration of theatre and kinema was due to accident or design, there is no doubt that the conception, policy, motive, organisation and subject of both were intended to be identical.

Their histories differ. At one time the Russian film industry was either dead or dying. Then came the war and the kinemas were given up to the exhibition of rubbish or propaganda. After the war, and in the first year or two of the revolution, many of them closed, or were put to a different purpose. But the bolshevist leaders knew the true importance of the kinema to the Revolution and to the new society in the making. Lenin declared that of all forms of "art" expression in Russia, the kinema was the most valuable. It is not plain what he meant by "art." As he understood the kinema it was an instrument for reflecting human thought and action according to definite bolshevist plan and purpose.

CONCEPT. The Russian kinema was conceived by Lenin and his associates as an organic part of the interpretative and

propaganda machinery of the State and the people. Or more simply, as a powerful weapon of public service.

POLICY. To establish a cheap Kinema for All, that should serve All.

MOTIVE. To keep the desire for liberation alive, and to encourage co-operation in the task of defending and rebuilding Russia.

ORGANISATION. On a national and rationalisation basis. That is, State control of all the machinery of the kinema industry on behalf of, and for the benefit of, the common folk. Amalgamation and centralisation of all the branches of production, distribution and exhibition for the purpose of attaining efficiency, concentration and arrangement of output that would place it within reach of the largest number of consumers.

PRODUCTION. (Since 1923.) Of apparatus and pictures to be so far as possible all-Russian with a view to increasing home industry and decreasing unemployment. Hence exports but no imports.

SUBJECT. The general subject dictated by the Revolution. To be handled by a committee of experts representing different shades of thought, political, scientific, economic, social, and versed in the new ideology of society. These to form a board of censorship, constituting a bolshevist united Front against reaction or counter-revolution.

DIVISION OF SUBJECT. The general subject of the struggle for and attainment of liberation fell under many heads. The films were classed accordingly. To-day the principle classes are:—The Mass Film; The Historical or Monumental film; The Heroic Realism film; The Reconstruction film; and The Box-office film. Two examples of the first are Eisenstein's "Potemkin" and "Ten Days That Shook The World."* An example of the second is "The Decembrists." The third is both historical and contemporary. As contemporary history, it is history in terms of contemporary life. Or we may say history repeating itself. A good example is found in "Dety Boory," a

film expressing the early revolutionary events of 1917. The aim of this kind of film is to exhibit contemporary men and women engaged in a titanic struggle against odds represented by historical facts. In form it resembles a Wild West thriller in which Reds and Whites replace Western cowboy bandits and mounted police. The reconstruction film falls into two parts, the technique of the rebuilding of Russia and the latest facts of the rebuilding of the citizen. Both co-operate to show the new social organisation being assisted to fulfil itself, by the removal of fossil and impeding forms and the construction and creation of new objective forms intended to exert a strong influence for good on those who live in or among them. Thus in the first part come architectural and engineering growths; in the second the reshaping physically and mentally of the common folk. An example of the first is "The Steel Arm," in which factories and forgeries are used to demonstrate the reconstruction of the large scale industry. Of the second, "Soviet Steps" is a fine example, while at the same time being a mixture of the two. Besides showing the steps of civic and industrial rebuilding, it shows the steps of maternity, from conception to the birth of the child. The Box-office film is one made especially for export. It depicts historical and contemporary Russian social life in human, sentimental and "artistic" terms. And it draws upon the large and rich stores of folk-tales which are so popular with the Russian masses. Such folk-tales are woven into some of the most popular operas which are performed at the State opera houses.

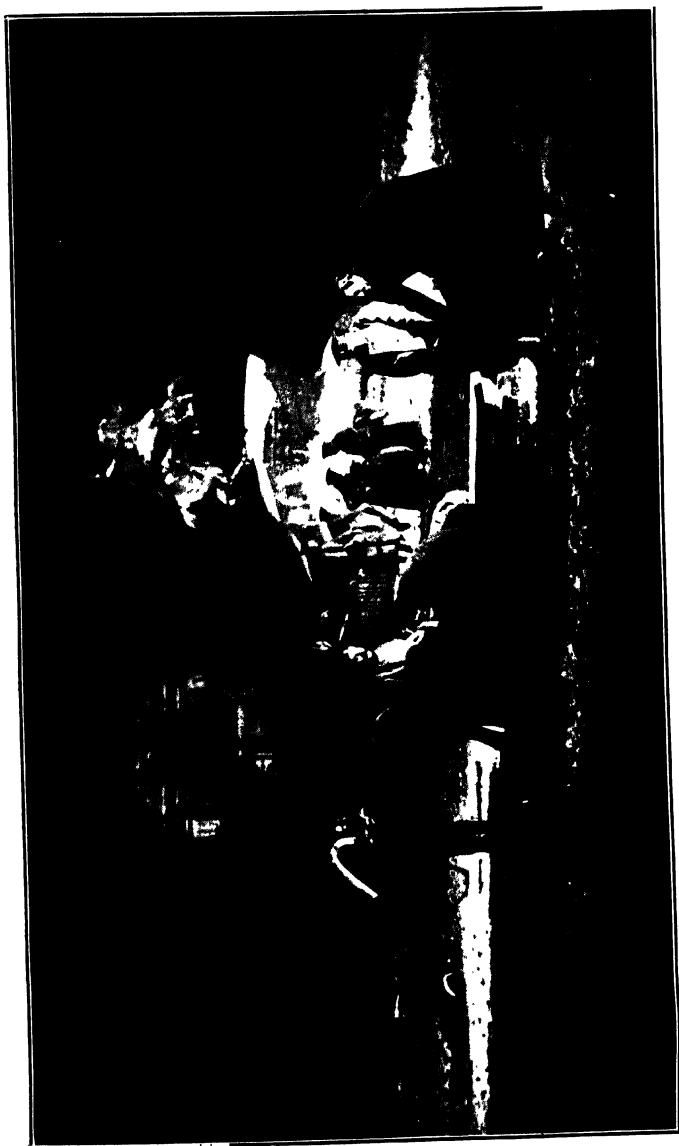
There is an experimental class which, though it is not directly under the control of the Government, is supervised by them. The aim of this class is the production of "art" films, and accordingly form takes first place. There is at Leningrad a very active school of experiment called the "Feks." More than one leading theatrical director and many of the new artist-mechanics of the theatre, have turned their attention to the æsthetic of the film, with the result that "constructions" have

found their way into pictures, as on to the stage. There is, for instance, the Martian fantasy "Aelita," in the designing of the setting and costumes for which Isaac Rabinovitch, and Madam Alexandra Exter, of the Kamerny theatre, collaborated.

But schools of experiment are not altogether the thing in present-day Russia. The demand is for the reflection of the objective world, of facts drawn from actual human life.

DISTRIBUTION. The distribution of films is mainly through Government channels. They are distributed to cinemas under Government control, and to private ones under Government supervision. This system has given rise to a peculiar division of the country into film areas, just as France was during the war divided into economic centres. Subjects are selected and distributed according to the needs of the different sections of the people. There is a film for the peasant; another for the factory worker and the proletarian; another for the town dweller; another for the visitors to the big city; another for educational centres, schools and children's cinemas. The peasant gets agricultural fare and the bolshevisation of the rural district; the factory worker gets industrial fare, plots and action; the young proletarians and the patrons of the proleto-cult film organisations get strong revolutionary fare, and so on.

TECHNICIANS. Prior to 1923 the Russian Government were crying out for foreign technicians for their film industry. Since then Russia seems to have bred a remarkable order of technicians who have succeeded not only in fostering the extraordinary new growth but in enabling it to capture the attention of the outside world. It is mainly due to the technical ideas and accomplishments of cameramen like Tisse, Eisenstein's photographer, and producers like Room, Kuleshov, Sabinski, Dziga-Vertov, Pudovkin, Cherbiakov, Ivanovski, Olga Probrashenskaia, and others, all of whom, however, show traces of German influence, that it is now the fashion in anti-soviet circles outside Russia to discuss banned Russian films as though they were the salt of the æsthetic earth. It is worthy of note that Eisenstein,



" THE DECEMBRISTS "

A bolshevist super-film exhibiting a screen version of the Decembrist revolt in 1825, in which the aristocracy and Cossack contingents took part. The scene is the famous Decabrist Square, the very spot whereon the cannon of Nicholas

with whom social content comes first, though exerting a very strong influence, has no school of followers. Pudovkin was under his influence when he produced "Mother," but has moved away from it, to some extent since. Eisenstein's "October" has been a failure in Russia, and this together with his strong leaning towards Hollywood and "talkies," may isolate him still more. Still, there is "The General Policy" to come. It is announced in true Hollywood fashion as being the greatest film on earth. If the announcement be true the film may have the effect of bringing all intellectual Europe and America to his feet in an act of adoration, in which case he may come to look elsewhere than in Russia for facts to fit in with this theory of a social mass film.

THE RADIO

CHAPTER XX

RADIO AND NATIONAL UNITY

THE theatre for All. The Kinema for All. The Radio for All. The Three in One for All. The unity of these three most powerful instruments in the service of the Russian people as a whole has been the basic principle upon which they have been developed.

There is no doubt that the development of the Radio in this direction has been a remarkable one. Anyone who visits Russia to-day must be surprised at the numerous signs of the very wide-spread interest in aerial transmission. In Moscow and Leningrad the roofs of public buildings and houses look like a forest of aerials. Even the old royal and public buildings have joined in to display masts 15 to 20 metres high and 52 metres wide standing amid dazzling gold domes. This forest has invaded the country and is rapidly spreading from city to town, to village, to the remotest hamlet. The masts have taken root in the cottages of the peasants, and will doubtless be made an indispensable part of the new dwellings for peasants and industrial workers as they are erected all over the country in accordance with the new building plans.

To-day every village has a wireless apparatus—one at least in its central hall where mass-listening takes place. Every toiler family in Moscow and Leningrad is in possession of an installation.

Inquiry shows that the Government are concentrating more and more on the common interpretative and illuminating social purpose of the theatre, kinema and radio. All for All is their

motto. To secure this end every means is being adopted.

As a correspondent in Russia to a foremost English Radio journal "The Broadcaster" I have had fullest opportunity of studying the various sides of the Radio question. Moreover when returning to England through Europe I have been able to use information so gained for comparative purposes. As a result I have noticed that with the exception of Germany, no country has a popular Radio movement similar to that in Russia. The use of wireless is still confined to the privileged classes. In Germany the big commercial transmission companies in association with the Government are trying to bring wireless to the dwellers in the rural districts by erecting large power stations and dividing the country into wireless districts, but it is rather a commercial than a social undertaking, the object is not to give the people cheap wireless, but to open up a wide market for the disposal of apparatus and to support the Government monopoly of Radio rights—rights involved in licences, the arrangement and control of programmes.

A Government monopoly exists in Russia. But its conception and use are altogether different from those of the German one. The Russian Radio industry is a non-commercial undertaking and its chief facts are as follows:

HISTORY. Broadcasting has existed in Russia for some years, but it is only within the past five years that serious attempts have been made to extend the use of wireless to the Mass instead of reserving it to the privileged classes only. The only "Privileged" class that exists in Russia to-day is a very small one. It consists of the official class, including all those who are engaged in Government offices and are privileged to use wireless for business purposes. During the comparatively short period of its rebirth, or as some would say, reorganisation, the Radio industry has been rapidly developed on mass lines in accordance with Government concept policy, motive, method and organisation.

CONCEPT. Radio For All. The wireless to be a means of

communication of social ideas, culture (the drama and music), and means of attack, defence and instruction, by which All can benefit.

POLICY. To make Russia one in thought, and action, nationally. To unite every part of Russia, the great city with the remotest village, so as to break down isolation, remove differences of conduct, of speech, of thought and action. To supplement the work of the theatre in space.

MOTIVE. To secure the complete co-operation of the people in the work of bolshevist social liberation.

METHOD. The broadcasting of political, economic and social ideas, thought, opinion, and matters pertaining to living, health, technical and other, and to culture found in the theatre, music, singing and all else that can be transmitted.

ORGANISATION. All broadcasting to be under Government control. Programmes to be prepared by the Government. Old stations to be rebuilt, new ones to be built. The charges for apparatus and licences to be the lowest possible. The Government to produce and distribute materials. Special attention to be made to the formation of societies for popularising Radio, making known its social nature, value and use, and assisting people to make, to obtain the loan of, or to purchase at a very small cost, the best apparatus. Such societies to promote broadcasting in the villages.

ACHIEVEMENT. The principal result has been to place broadcasting on a national basis, and to make highly instructive programmes accessible to the Mass. For sixpence everyone can enjoy a continuously changing programme consisting of political, scientific, cultural and miscellaneous items drawn from the very best sources. Under the State and co-operative system, experts and the most efficient artistes—singers, actors, musicians, etc., must co-operate.

SOCIETIES. There exists a powerful society with a membership of over 50,000, and having large headquarters at Moscow. It is called The Society of the Friends of Radio. Its object is

to popularise the use of wireless. It receives assistance from the Government and issues an official organ "Radio For All." Besides this, it is responsible for the circulation of a considerable amount of wireless literature.

Enough has been said to show that in Russia wireless is recognised as of great importance to the rebuilding, the welfare, and the culture of the nation and people. It is indeed recognised as an indispensable instrument of sociological expression, one moreover that supplements and is not separated from the theatre and the kinema in this respect. It supplies the power of transmission which they lack. In short Russian wireless in co-operation with the New Russian theatre and kinema unite the peoples of Russia into one conscious community.

CHAPTER XXI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

IN the foregoing chapters I have shown that in Russia a New theatre has appeared during 1917-28. I have made a full analysis and synthesis of that theatre. I have traced its dramatic unfolding under the touch of a new spirit, or purpose. I have revealed the historical and contemporary influences on its birth. I have considered the facts of its actual birth, and analysed the processes of its growth and development.

Its purpose is a social one (or strictly speaking a sociological one), to form an organic part of the community, to reflect and interpret, with the aid of all, a new social world and a new type of citizen in the making as determined by a doctrine of social liberation. It stands, in fact, to help to solve a social problem as conceived of by Marx and made practical by Lenin.

For a parallel to the kind of mass development of theatrical expression implicit in this purpose we must go back four centuries to a period when the Theatre, generally speaking, was the property of the people, and used by them as a playground in which they could build a heaven as they understood it, and play with their own idea of liberation from evil.

In making this analysis and synthesis I have followed the method of Building. I have considered in order the plan, foundations, materials, and erection of a working model of the New theatre which shall be capable of being copied on the largest scale wherever the theatre is held to be a living thing with a vital function to fulfil for man, which to-day is to help the new social organisation to get itself fulfilled. The building processes thus fall into four main periods, historical, immediate

past, present and possible—each of which stands for a more or less distinct signification in the development of a theatre resting on the purpose of the reflection of social liberation through a new social organisation.

To these four sections I have added a fifth to show the extension of the sociological expression of the New theatre by means of its alliance with two powerful mediums of expression, the kinema and wireless, which are developing their function, popular service, in harmony with that of the theatre, according to Government policy of the theatre, kinema and radio for All. Each must supplement the task of the others.

Though I use the term building to describe this epochal analysis and synthesis, I do not mean that the new purpose has produced a new architectural form of theatre. The extreme lack of money in Russia would prevent that. The exterior of the Russian theatre is the pre-war traditional one; the interior has been altered and adapted to serve the new function. Probably when Russia has settled its grave financial difficulties, function will be allowed to dictate form as is the case with the new functional architecture.

With no money to build a new form of theatre, the most the master-builders (the leading theatrical directors) could do was to adapt the auditorium and the stage to meet the social new requirements. It is shown how they did so.

The stages of the development of the content dictated by the Revolution together with those of the forms best fitted to give it the most efficient interpretation and representation are traced. As the content is living and dynamic, the reflection of a life-centred world, the forms of the objects and agents of interpretation and representation have similar characteristics. The actor becomes more and more dynamic, more expressive of livingness under the pressure of a life-centred content, and as he becomes more and more plastic and constructive, more capable of using every part of himself under a system of physical culture acting, so the stage becomes living and dynamic in order to give

his movements full effect. For the first time in its history the stage comes fully to life and puts on acting attributes. It is seen in volcanic eruption throwing up constructions that repeat the intensity of the emotions given by the play, that take on the auditorium levels, that serve mass intentions and cinematographic ends. Thus the stage and setting become functional parts of the actor. In short, the facts of the remarkable technical evolution—the most remarkable in recent time—that has caused constructive synthesis to take the place of the old and discredited æsthetic synthesis, are dealt with in detail.

I have divided the building into five processes. First there is the collection of the building material in the past and present. I show how historically the New theatre derived its fundamental motive of liberation and its "soul" of livingness from forces and circumstances in the past. The idea of liberation sprang from the struggle for improved conditions at an early period of Russia's history. It was fertilised by the later struggles of the common people, and by the ideals and theories of powerful intellectual radical leaders. Marx was the first to put the idea into dramatic form. His economic interpretation of history with its implied far-off struggle between masters and slaves set the common people unfolding towards a higher level in true dramatic fashion. It set up an ever-flowing current of human interest which it is the business of the theatre to express, and without which it cannot live.

Marx's theory of the common people unfolding blindly in the past under the touch of slavery and tribulation to arrive in the future at a conscious unfolding is the activity which is called the drama. The thing behind the activity is Drama. This activity is found in all truly great plays. It is found in the Life of Christ and in "The Doll's House." The book shows how this motive of the common people unfolding under adversity and success got into the theatre and quickened it.

The survey of contemporary material shows of what this material is composed. Concepts, ideals and ideas,

philosophy, religion, science, economics, the elements of Militant Bolshevism and National Bolshevism, the basic principle of a new language, a new ideology, a new technique and a new liberation for the people, all are considered as bricks and mortar of the new structure.

In the second process come the questions of organisation, nationalisation and rationalisation of theatrical machinery that the builders may take fullest advantage of the great new opportunities of theatrical building presented to them by this material.

The Builders themselves and their special equipment for their great task are examined. Their concepts, policies, ideas and achievements are described. Their experiments and their different attitudes towards continuity during the first stage of building are considered.

Then comes a period of transition, of interference and setback owing to the New Economic Policy and the re-appearance of a small capitalist class. But the proletarians are alert and the danger of reaction is averted.

Next I come to the third process, the process of completing the theatre, and the first period of stability extending from 1923 to 1927. The theatre is seen to be dominated by the spirit of economic reconstruction, though in some of its plays and forms it is still within the militant period. But fighting, such as it appears, is for the purpose of clearing away evil elements and other obstructions.

This period is marked by four features—the movement in the theatre towards socialist unity; the movement of even the most conservative directors towards the Left; the intellectual conduct of the theatre at first, and the proletarian conduct of it later. The latter is shown to be a sign of the growing pressure of the Mass on the theatre.

Under the intellectuals the theatre makes astonishing progress. Free from the difficulties and hardships of revolution and Civil War they are able to bring the full force of their vision, power of invention, their logic and technical experience to bear

300 THE NEW SPIRIT IN THE RUSSIAN THEATRE

on the problem of producing a vital theatre, bred by the spirit of the epoch, and a concentration of the life and thought of the people.

Another period of transition comes in 1927 when The Break and other political matters intervene to disturb the calm flow of theatrical building.

The fourth process is that of the completion of the New theatre which can be considered only in the light of future conditions. The theatre is seen to have reached a kind of completion which seems to point the way that Russian theatrical development will pursue in the future. As the tendency in the Russian theatre, that is the tendency towards the expression of social life, or sociological expression as we may call it, is a world tendency, probably it prophesies the coming of the organic theatre whose function and form shall be determined by social matter and manner. In any case, it is a model of the new functional, the new life-centred theatre.

The conclusion is that a great epoch of the Russian theatre began in 1917. There definitely existed a new spirit (or purpose) waiting to take possession of it. This purpose was the reflection, the interpretation, the illumination of a society unfolding towards a higher level of liberation and consciousness. Previous ages had already witnessed odds and ends of the vision of liberation theatricalised, but it was reserved for the 1917-28 period of Russian history to see this theatricalisation erected into a harmonious system. The theatrical fragments of the past have come together in the form of a theatre that communicates the new aspirations and the new tendencies in all fields of intellectual and emotional activity concerned with nation and citizen building on the largest and latest plan.

It is necessary that this theatre be examined and used as far as possible to assist theatres of all other countries to free themselves from the merely commercial and expedient, and to escape from the fossil traditions that petrify them to their very roots. Escape along the line opened up by the Russian theatre

would not be difficult, for there are signs that the liberating agent, the sociological expression, that is, bits of the true expression of the structure of our new civilisation, are already in them, though, unfortunately, not intelligently recognised as yet.'

I have added a brief section on the Kinema and Radio to show that those who aspire towards a new theatre with a vital function, who would proceed scientifically and synthetically as the epoch demands, must reckon with these latest and powerful instruments of interpretation and communication as organic parts of the theatre structure.

APPENDICES

I. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND LIST OF THEATRICAL VISITORS TO RUSSIA

THERE is no literature of the New Russian theatre either in Russia or out of it. There is a body of loose material that throws a partial and partisan light on the aim and work of the theatre. But there are no theatrical annals, books or periodicals that supplement each other and by which it is possible to reconstruct the New theatre in its entirety, showing its stages of erection, the interrelation of social and theatrical events that have determined its content and form, and the forces and circumstances that have restored the function which it must fulfil for the Mass.

In Russia there is no work on the complete theatre as it appears to-day, or set of works containing essential facts and documentary evidence and proofs of the entire unique theatrical experiment. There exist odds and ends of facts and loose information to which those who seek to compile a complete work must add first-hand observation, a comprehensive knowledge of the theory and practice of the Theatre generally speaking, and an apprehension of their own of the new theatrical values.

There exist incomplete technical surveys of the value of N. Giliarovskaia's "Five Years Theatre Decoration", philosophical discussions, elaborate critical essays, symposia which like the symposium on the October theatre, barely touch upon essential sides of the theatre, important but very sketchy autobiographies like Stanislavski's, "My Life in Art," that contain but a few guarded pages on the post-Revolution period, critical and constructive articles in newspapers and periodicals that are concerned not so much with the vital facts of the theatre as with

the Russian critics' incurable mania for metaphysical disquisition. There is also information of a kind buried in catalogues of big bolshevist exhibitions like the U.R.S.S. section of the Paris Decorative Exhibition of 1925.

Abroad there is very little material indeed by which to compose a picture of the complete theatre. Though there is a good deal of information buried in books, newspapers and periodicals, on the whole it is neither satisfactory nor truthful. Apart from the fact that it is vitiated by some prejudice or other, that it rests on political, moral, æsthetic, commercial and economic bias, it is mainly provided by persons who have not visited Russia or have visited Russia without any qualification for writing about the New theatre.

So far as I know not one foreign writer has approached the subject of the New Russian theatre aware that he was approaching a great problem and its solution of the epoch. The problem of the Theatre is a great problem of the epoch. It is the problem of making the Theatre a functional part of the people. What had to be written about the Russian theatre was that it had stated the problem and by doing so had arrived at a solution. Its plays were proof that it was living and thinking for the people.

Put all the fragments of information together and we shall not find an appreciation or recognition of this vital problem. The reason is simply that the right state of mind does not exist outside Russia for conceiving the Theatre as a social liberator from evil, and a machine for the mass-production of good. The Russians have conceived a theatre that shall serve the Mass.

For this reason the bulk of information of the New Russian theatre is bad and misleading. I shall not mention its sources here. I have before me fifty long newspaper articles. Not one is of value to the present-day or future historian.

It may be instructive to add at this point the Russian official list of "theatrical" visitors to Moscow, and the duration of their visits.

1. Huntly Carter	- -	Described in Russian prints as the "English specialist on the Russian theatre"	Several visits
2. Basil Dean	- -	The leading English theatre director	Three weeks
3. Ernst Toller	- -	German playwright	Six weeks
4. Director of Norwegian theatre	- -	- - -	Brief visit
5. Madam Jean Fannonel	- -	Of the French Theatre	"
6. Douglas Fairbanks	}	Film Star	48 hours
7. Mary Pickford		Film Star	48 hours
8. Alexander Bakshy	- -	Writer of disquisitions on the Kinema	Three weeks
9. Lee Simonson	- -	A director of the Guild theatre, New York	Two weeks
10. Maurice Guest	- -	An American Impresario	Two or three visits
11. Jurivanta	- -	Director of the Municipal theatre of Vyborg	Brief visit
12. Prof. H. W. L. Dana	- -	American dramatic critic	"
13. Herbert Beberman	- -	Manager of Yale theatre	"
14. Herr Eggers	- -	Of the German People's theatre	"
15. Head manager of the Japanese art theatre (Osanov)	- -	- - -	"
16. Madam Lara and M. Anton	- -	Of the Comedie Française	"
<i>Not in the official list.</i>			
17. Oliver M. Saylor	- -	Associated with Maurice Guest, New York	Two visits
18. Erwin Piscator	- -	Director, Piscator-bühne, Berlin	"
19. Walter Hasenclever	- -	German playwright	Brief visit

Abroad books fall into four classes:

I. Books wholly concerned with the Russian theatre. So far as I know there are only three books that deal with the New Russian theatre as a whole.

A. My first book on the Russian theatre and kinema 1917-23.

B. The present book. 1917-28, and historical origins.

C. "Das Russische Theatre" by Joseph Gregor and René Fülöp-Miller. This is a study of the comparative history of the Russian theatre and finds parallels between the classic and present-day theatrical tendencies. The Russian Ballet comes in for a large share of attention. The work is divided into two parts, explanatory text, and over four hundred illustrations in-

cluding a comparatively small bolshevist section. The evidence is drawn from documents some of which Herr Miller has studied in Russia, and others in the National Library at Vienna. It is not clear whether Herr Miller studied the New Russian theatre first hand, but if so it is clear that his theatrical knowledge was not sufficient for his observation.

2. Books dealing with a special side of the Russian theatre. There are three by Mr. Oliver M. Sayler, who has come to be known as the historian of the Moscow Art Academic theatre, which he calls rather extravagantly, "The World's First theatre." According to his account this theatre has not caught up to the Revolution, as yet.

A. "The Russian theatre Under the Revolution." An illustrated report of the situation in the Moscow and Leningrad Academic theatres during the winter of 1917-18, before any marked change had taken place in them. A feature of the book is the description of theatrical personalities.

B. "The Russian theatre" (Brentano). A reprint of the above with some new illustrations and additional information of changes in the academic theatres.

C. "Inside the Moscow Art theatre" (Brentano). An illustrated account of the Moscow Art Academic theatre company at home after its prolonged tour in America under the direction of Maurice Guest, and its reaction to American commercial system of organisation. The author argues that the M.K.A.T. was completely revitalised by its American tour; that it learned America's secret of 100 p.c. productivity; and that it has no bolshevist revolutionary tendencies.

3. Books containing a section on the New Russian theatre. Three may be mentioned.

A. My work on "The New Spirit in the European theatre, 1914-25" which contains two sections.

B. "The Mind and face of Bolshevism" by René Fülöp-Miller, which contains a section designed to illustrate the author's theory that Russia has gone back to scratch, and the

Mass which it intends shall eventually rule is merely a reversion to the "nameless beast" of Bible history.

C. "The Russian Revolution" by Lancelot Lawson. Contains a typical journalistic section on the theatre. The author shows no conception of plan or policy, but treats the theatre as a "news item."

Three existing periodicals may be recommended as reliable sources of information.

a. "Life of Art" (Jizni Iskusstva), Leningrad and Moscow.

b. "The New Stage" (Novei Zretel) Moscow.

c. "Das Neue Russland" Berlin.

4. Books reviewing the technical tendencies in the general Theatre from the beginning of the 20th century, and containing a Russian section. A valuable example appears in "Twentieth Century Stage Decoration" by W. R. Feurst and Samuel J. Hume. It falls into two parts, explanatory text and over 400 illustrations.

APPENDIX 2

Lists of productions in Moscow and Leningrad, 1917-28 in chronological order. Also list of new bolshevist authors and their plays.

These lists are not exhaustive except in the case of the M.K.A.T. and the M.G.K.T. Lists of the Meierhold theatre, the Jewish Kamerny theatre, and other theatres that come under the head of Left and Revolutionary theatres, are omitted here. But important productions at these theatres are discussed in the body of the book. The following lists are those of the State theatres. The State theatre system is, at the present time, as follows. The former imperial theatres in Moscow and Leningrad, also the Moscow Art theatre, the Moscow Kamerny theatre, Meierhold's theatre, the Moscow Jewish Kamerny theatre, small experimental theatres, like the Travelling theatre at Leningrad, and dramatic studios, like the 1st Moscow Art theatre Studio, are considered wholly State theatres. They

bear the title of "Academic" which suggests that they have a cultural purpose. They receive a State subsidy in return for which they are expected to place a percentage of seats, it used to be 15 p.c., at the disposal of working-class organisations at very reduced rates. Under the present State system the organisation of the theatre which once rested on a soviet basis follows that of State theatres abroad. But these State theatres and indeed all the theatres in Russia are under strict Government supervision. Subjects for plays and operas, as well as alterations in plays by new authors are dictated by a special advisory committee formed for the purpose of advising on the circumstances of the hour demanding to be theatricalised.

A. MOSCOW ART ACADEMIC THEATRE (M.K.A.T.)

Season 1917-1918 :

"The Village Stepanchikovo"	-	-	-	-	F. Dostolevski
"The Blue Bird"	-	-	-	-	Maeterlinck
"In the Claws of Life"	-	-	-	-	Knut Hamsun
"At the Tsar's Door"	-	-	-	-	"
"The Cherry Orchard"	-	-	-	-	A. Chekov
"Three Sisters"	-	-	-	-	"
"Lower Depths"	-	-	-	-	M. Gorki
"The Death of Pazuhin"	-	-	-	-	M. Saltikov-Shchedrin
"Enough Stupidity in Every Wise Man"	-	-	-	-	A. Ostrovski
"The Sorrows of the Spirit"	-	-	-	-	A. Griboyedov
"Autumn Violins"	-	-	-	-	J. Surguchev
"A Month in the Country"	-	-	-	-	J. Turgenev
"Three Short Plays"	-	-	-	-	"
"The Stone Guest"	-	-	-	-	A. Pushkin
"Fear during the Plague"	-	-	-	-	"

Season, 1918-1919 :

"Tsar Feodor"	-	-	-	-	A. Tolstoi
"Three Sisters"	-	-	-	-	A. Chekov
"The Cherry Orchard"	-	-	-	-	A. Chekov
"In the Claws of Life"	-	-	-	-	K. Hamsun
"The Cricket on the Hearth"	-	-	-	-	C. Dickens
"Enough Stupidity"	-	-	-	-	A. Ostrovski
"Lower Depths"	-	-	-	-	M. Gorki
"The Blue Bird"	-	-	-	-	M. Maeterlinck
"At the Tsar's Door"	-	-	-	-	K. Hamsun
"Autumn Violins"	-	-	-	-	J. Surguchev
"The Death of Pazuhin"	-	-	-	-	M. Saltikov-Shchedrin
"The Sorrows of the Spirit"	-	-	-	-	A. Griboyedov
"The Village Stepanchikovo"	-	-	-	-	F. Dostolevski
"Ivanov"	-	-	-	-	A. Chekov
"Fear during the Plague"	-	-	-	-	A. Pushkin
"The Stone Guest"	-	-	-	-	"
"Uncle Vanya"	-	-	-	-	A. Chekov

Season 1919-1920 :

"Tsar Feodor"	-	-	-	-	-	-	A. Tolstol
(1st Studio) "The Cricket on the Hearth"	-	-	-	-	-	-	C. Dickens
"The Lower Depths"	-	-	-	-	-	-	M. Gorki
(1st Studio) "Twelfth Night"	-	-	-	-	-	-	Shakespeare
"Cain"	-	-	-	-	-	-	Byron (1st performance, 4, iv)
"The Daughter of Madame Angot"	-	-	-	-	-	-	Lecocq (1st performance, 16, v)

Season 1920-1921 :

(1st Studio) "Balladina"	-	-	-	-	-	-	U. Slovatskoi
"The Flood"	-	-	-	-	-	-	H. Berger
"The Cricket on the Hearth"	-	-	-	-	-	-	C. Dickens
"The Hostess of the Inn"	-	-	-	-	-	-	Goldoni
"Madame Angot"	-	-	-	-	-	-	Lecocq
"Enough Stupidity"	-	-	-	-	-	-	A. Ostrovski
"The Lower Depths"	-	-	-	-	-	-	M. Gorki
"The Blue Bird"	-	-	-	-	-	-	Maeterlinck

Season 1921-1922 :

"Uncle Vanya"	-	-	-	-	-	-	A. Chekov
"Revizor"	-	-	-	-	-	-	N. Gogol
"The Blue Bird"	-	-	-	-	-	-	M. Maeterlinck
(1st Studio) "Eric XIV"	-	-	-	-	-	-	A. Strindberg
"The Flood"	-	-	-	-	-	-	H. Berger
"The Lower Depths"	-	-	-	-	-	-	M. Gorki
"Madame Angot"	-	-	-	-	-	-	Lecocq
(1st Studio) "The Cricket on the Hearth"	-	-	-	-	-	-	C. Dickens
"Enough Stupidity"	-	-	-	-	-	-	A. Ostrovski
"Turgenev Cycle"	-	-	-	-	-	-	
"Tsar Feodor"	-	-	-	-	-	-	A. Tolstol

From the opening of the theatre in 1898 to 1917 there were sixty-one productions. Of these less than twenty were performed during 1917-1923. Among the missing authors are: Ibsen, Andreiev, Hauptmann, and Sophocles. And among the missing plays are: "The Sunken Bell," "Drayman Henschel," "Lonely Lives," "The Merchant of Venice," "Julius Cæsar," "Hamlet," "Hedda Gabler," "An Enemy of the People," "When we Dead Awaken," "The Wild Duck," "Ghosts," "Brand," "Rosmersholm," and "Pillars of Society." A change to a more revolutionary programme is noticeable in 1919, when Byron's "Cain" and "Madame Angot" were produced. "Cain" deals with the ultimate revolt. "Madame Angot" is set in a revolutionary period. 1919 was the black year in the Russian theatre. It will be noticed that the M.A.T. gave only two pieces, both of which had a significance for bolshevists. The remaining two pieces were performed by the 1st Studio.

"The Cricket on the Hearth" is regarded in Moscow as a socialist play.

Season 1922-24.

In the Autumn of 1922 the M.K.A.T. company went on an extensive tour in Western Europe and America. It returned to Moscow in the Autumn of 1924. From that time Stanislavski's policy took a decided revolutionary turn, which reached a culmination with the production of "The Armoured Train" in 1927. The bolsheviks said that Stanislavski had entered the revolutionary fold at last. A noteworthy feature of this tendency is the encouragement given by Stanislavski to new young bolshevik authors.

Season 1925-26 :

"Pugatchevskena"	-	-	-	-	-	N. Trenev
"The Decembrists" (1825)	-	-	-	-	-	
"Hot Heart"	-	-	-	-	-	Ostrovski
"Sellers of Fame"	-	-	-	-	-	Paniol and Nevla
"Nicholas I and The Decembrists"	-	-	-	-	-	Vecherom
(Alexander 1st dies and Nicholas 1st ascends the throne)						

Season 1926-27 :

"The Day of the Turbins"	-	-	-	-	-	M. Bulgakov
"The Marriage of Figaro"	-	-	-	-	-	Beaumarchais

Season 1927-28 :

On the Small Stage—						
"The Sisters Gerard"	-	-	-	-	-	A translation of the "Two Orphans." The play was produced because like "The Marriage of Figaro" it is set in a revolutionary period

On the M.K.A.T. Stage—						
"The Armoured Train"	-	-	-	-	-	Vsevolod Ivanov
"Blockade"	-	-	-	-	-	
"Untilovsk"	-	-	-	-	-	Leonid Leonov
"The Defrauder"	-	-	-	-	-	V. Kataev

In October, 1928, the 30th anniversary of the theatre was celebrated. One evening was set apart for the performance of selections from its new repertory.

B. THE MOSCOW STATE KAMERNY THEATRE (M.G.K.T.)

Season 1914-15 :

"Sakuntala"	-	-	-	-	-	Kalidasa
"Famira Kathira"	-	-	-	-	-	
"The Playboy of the Western World"	-	-	-	-	-	Synge
"Life is a Dream"	-	-	-	-	-	Kalidasa
"The Fan"	-	-	-	-	-	Goldoni
"The Pentecost at Toledo"	-	-	-	-	-	Kuzmin

Season 1915-16 :

"The Marriage of Figaro"	-	-	-	-	-	Beaumarchais
"The Carnival of Life"	-	-	-	-	-	de Buëlle
"Cyrano de Bergerac"	-	-	-	-	-	Rostand
"Two Worlds"	-	-	-	-	-	Ter Herberg,

Season 1916-17 :

"The Merry Wives of Windsor"	-	-	-	-	-	Shakespeare
"The Veil of Pierrette"	-	-	-	-	-	Donanhy
"Thamira of the Cithern"	-	-	-	-	-	Anniensky
"The Supper of Jokes"	-	-	-	-	-	Benelli
"The Straw Hat"	-	-	-	-	-	Labiche
"The Blue Carpet"	-	-	-	-	-	Stolitsa

Season 1917-18 :

"Salome"	-	-	-	-	-	O. Wilde
"King Harlequin"	-	-	-	-	-	Lotar
"The Box of Toys"	-	-	-	-	-	Debussy
"The Exchange"	-	-	-	-	-	Claudiel

Season 1919-20 :

"Adrienne Lecouvreur"	-	-	-	-	-	Scribe
"Princess Brambilla"	-	-	-	-	-	Hoffman

Season 1920-21 :

"The Tidings Brought to Mary"	-	-	-	-	-	Claudiel
"Romeo and Juliet"	-	-	-	-	-	Shakespeare

Season 1921-22 :

"Phœdre"	-	-	-	-	-	Racine
"Senor Formica"	-	-	-	-	-	Hoffman
"Girofle-Girofla"	-	-	-	-	-	Lecocq
"The Sisters," Operetta based on a motive taken from the Commedia dell'Arte	-	-	-	-	-	

Season 1923-24 :

"The Man Who Was Thursday"	-	-	-	-	-	G. K. Chesterton
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Season 1924-25 :

"Kukirol," a revue	-	-	-	-	-	-
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Season 1925-26 :

"The Hairy Ape"	-	-	-	-	-	E. O'Neill
"Saint Joan"	-	-	-	-	-	G. B. Shaw
"Roxita"	-	-	-	-	-	Globi
"Desire Under the Elms"	-	-	-	-	-	E. O'Neill
"Day and Night"	-	-	-	-	-	Lecocq

Season 1927-8 :

"Antigone"	-	-	-	-	-	Walter Hasenclever
"Sirocco"	-	-	-	-	-	Zaka and Dantsigera
"All God's Chillun Got Wings"	-	-	-	-	-	E. O'Neill

C. MEIERHOLD'S THEATRE (T.I.M.)

The list of plays is given in the body of the book.

D. THE MOSCOW STATE THEATRES

(The Old Imperial Theatres)

THE BIG THEATRE

Season 1917-18 :

Operas.

"The Golden Cockerel."
 "Ruslan and Ludmila."
 "Mazeppa."
 "Eugene Onegin."
 "The Immortal Wizard."
 "Traviata."
 "Aida."
 "Romeo and Juliet."
 "The Pearl Seeker."
 "The Tsar's Bride."
 "Rigoletto."
 "Tales of Tsar Saltan."
 "Samson and Delilah."
 "The Barber of Seville."
 "Dubrovsky."
 "Sadko."
 "Demon."
 "Miniona."
 "Huguenot."
 "Manon."

Ballets.

"The Sleeping Beauty."
 "Coppelia."
 "Don Quixote."
 "The Dancer."
 "Vain Caution."
 "The Little Humpback Horse."
 "Corsair."
 "Love is Swift."
 "Raimonda."
 "The Swan Lake."

Season 1918-19 :

Operas.

"Ruslan and Ludmila."
 "Eugene Onegin."
 "Demon."
 "The Tsar's Bride."
 "Queen of Spades."
 "Samson and Delilah."
 "Sadko."
 "Traviata."
 "Aida."
 "Rigoletto."
 "Rhinegold."
 "Romeo and Juliet."
 "Lakme."
 "The Pearl Seeker."
 "Huguenot."
 "Manon."
 "Christmas Eve."
 "Tannhäuser."
 "Valkyrie."

Ballets.

"The Swan Lake."
 "The Little Humpback Horse."
 "Jisel."
 "Love is Swift."
 "Vain Caution."
 "Corsair."
 "Coppelia."
 "Stenka Razin."
 "The Dancer."
 "Raimonda."
 "The Sleeping Beauty."
 "Don Quixote."
 "Nutcracker."

Season 1919-20 :

Operas.
 "Queen of Spades."
 "Ruslan and Ludmila."
 "Sadko."
 "Lakme."
 "The Tsar's Bride."
 "Aida."
 "Tales of Tsar Saltan."
 "Barber of Seville."
 "Valkyrie."
 Symphony Concerts.

Ballets.
 "Nutcracker."
 "Don Quixote."
 "Vain Caution."
 "Love is Swift."
 "Coppella."
 "Corsair."
 "The Little Humpback Horse."
 "The Swan Lake."

**Season 1921-22-23 :*

Operas.
 "Ruslan and Ludmila."
 "Prince Igor."
 "Queen of Spades."
 "The Tsar's Bride."
 "Barber of Seville."
 "Eugene Onegin."
 "Boris Gudonov."
 "Sadko."
 "Tales of Tsar Saltan."
 "The Snow Maiden."
 "Carmen."
 "The Mermaid."
 "Lohengrin."

Ballets.
 "Corsair."
 "Don Quixote."
 "Coppella."
 "The Little Humpback Horse."
 "Raimonda."
 "The Magic Mirror."
 "Vain Caution."
 "Love is Swift."
 "The Swan Lake."
 "The Dancer."
 "Petrushka."
 "Grotto of Venus."
 "Spanish Caprice."

} Triple
 Bill

* More recent lists are not available.

There are two State theatres in Moscow, the Big and the Little. The plays at the Little theatre have changed from classics to present-day social pieces as shown elsewhere.

E. THE LENINGRAD STATE THEATRES

There are three State theatres in Leningrad: the Alexandrinski, the Michaelovski, and the Marinski. They are now called Academic theatres. The following is an analysis of the lists given to me in 1924. At the Alexandrinski and Michaelovski theatres there were, from 1917 to 1923, 111 productions of plays and 1,443 performances. Of the 111, 43 were new productions or revised productions. The plays were of partly a popular and partly a bolshevist character. They included several belonging to the Moscow Art theatre repertory. For instance, "Lower Depths" (21 performances), "Enough Stupidity" (10), "Revizor" (69, twice the number of performances of any other piece), "The Sorrows of the Spirit" (comes third with 48 performances), "Tsar Feodor" (is sixth, with

34). "The Serf" takes second place with 58 performances. Some pieces which are now included in the repertory of the Meierhold theatre and the Moscow Theatre of Revolutionary Satire were not so popular. "The Death of Tarelkin" was performed 18 times; Martine's "Night," which is now known as "The Earth Prancing," was played only 8 times. Tolstoi's "Power of Darkness" had 12 performances. But the list is chiefly remarkable as showing the great number of performances of serious plays in a city, during a period when its population fell from over 3,000,000 to less than 1,000,000.

The Operas and Ballets at the Marinski and Michaelovski theatres during the same period were almost the same as those produced at Moscow. There were 58 productions and 1,215 performances. Of the 58 there were no less than 43 new or revised productions. This result shows a good deal of activity. As a guide to public taste, the following number of performances are instructive: "Demon," 54; "Prince Igor," 51; "Barber of Seville," "Queen of Spades," 50; "The Beggar Student," "Rigoletto," 46; "Traviata," 37; "Carmen," 35; "Romeo and Juliet," "Boheme," 34. Then comes "Fra Diavolo," "Boris Gudonov," "Faust," "Valkyrie," with more than 20 each. "Madame Butterfly," "Aida," "Lakme," and "Werther" are in their teens. At the bottom of the list are "Samson and Delilah," "Mephistopheles," "Don Quixote," with 3 each; "Lohengrin," 2; and "Mazeppa," 1.

It will be noticed that "Faust" has a fairly high percentage of performances. The opera is one that is held to be harmless and old-fashioned outside Russia. But in Russia it is held to be an opera of revolt. The revolt is against the limitations of human life. According to the bolshevists most of the popular operas and ballets in the lists given, have revolutionary elements if not at the surface then beneath it, which can be used to saturate a primitive audience with the proper emotion. Within the past four or five years it has been the fashion in bolshevist circles outside Russia to discover elements of revolt in the works

by great composers like Beethoven and Mozart, as well as in those by great poets and writers, Milton; Æschylus, "Prometheus Bound" (revolt against tyranny of strength); Shelley, "Prometheus Unbound" (revolt against tyranny of hate).

The following supplementary lists will indicate the more recent path of the Leningrad State, or old Imperial theatres.

NEW PRODUCTIONS IN THE LENINGRAD ACADEMIC THEATRES
DURING THE 1925-6 SEASON

(A) ACADEMIC DRAMATIC THEATRE (formerly the Alexandrinski Theatre)

"Poison."	-	-	-	A. B. Lunacharski
"Not Worth a Penny"	-	-	-	Ostrovski
"The Sceptre"	-	-	-	A. Erman
"Pugachevschena"	-	-	-	Trenev
"Ivan Kalaisv"	-	-	-	Kalygena and Vladimir
"Pushkin and Dantes"	-	-	-	V. Kamenski
"In Memory of Lenin"	-	-	-	Kurganova

(B) ACADEMIC THEATRE, OPERA AND BALLET (formerly Marinski Theatre)

"Vera Scheloga"	-	-	-	Rimski-Korsakov
"Falstaff"	-	-	-	A. Boito
"Pulchinella"	-	-	-	Stravinski

(C) ACADEMIC LITTLE THEATRE (formerly Michaelovski Theatre)

"Mona Lisa"	-	-	-	M. Schillingsa and Gerkena
"Dolina"	-	-	-	D. Albera
"George Gapon"	-	-	-	N. N. Schapobalenko
"Society of Honourable Bell-ringers"	-	-	-	E. Zamiatina
"Jellow Jacket"	-	-	-	F. Legara

(D) ACADEMIC THEATRES STUDIO

"Revizor"	-	-	-	Gogol
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(F) PLAYS BY A. LUNACHARSKI, MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND ART

"Faust and the City"	"The Magi"
"Cromwell"	"Vasilisa the Wise"
"The Chancellor and the Locksmith"	"Don Quixote Released"
"Thomas Campanella"	"Poison"
"Steps"	"Velvet and Rags"
	"The Incendiary"

Some of these have been produced out of Russia. "The Incendiary," at the Piscator-bühne, Berlin, under the direction of the radical producer Erwin Piscator.

(G) THE NEW BOLSHEVIST REPERTORY

LIST OF PLAYS PERFORMED IN MOSCOW DURING 1927-28

The Small theatre	-	-	"Lubov Yarovaia"	-	-	Trenev
			"The Growth"	-	-	Gliebov
			"Amba"	-	-	Tchallil
Trades Union theatre (M.G.S.P.S.)	-	-	"Calm"	-	-	Bill-Belotserk- ovski
			"The Moon of the Left"	-	-	Bill-Belotserk- ovski
			"Constantine Teriokhin"	-	-	Kirshon and Ouspenski
			"Cement"	-	-	Gladkov
Dramatic theatre	-	-	"The Snow Storm"	-	-	Schtcheglov
			"The Wonder in a Sieve"	-	-	Alexis Tolstol
			"Azev"	-	-	-
Vakhtangov theatre	-	-	"The Badgers"	-	-	Leonov
			"Trouadek"	-	-	Jules Romain
Moscow State Kamerny theatre	-	-	"Desire Under the Elms"	-	-	O'Neill
			"Rosita"	-	-	Andre Globi
			"Day and Night"	-	-	Waldemar Mass
			"Antigone"	-	-	Hasenclever
Meierhold's theatre	-	-	"The Revizor"	-	-	Gogol
			"Roar, China!"	-	-	Tretiakov
Theatre of Satire	-	-	"The Intrigue"	-	-	Nikoulin
			"Xmas Eve"	-	-	Mass and Turov
Little theatre Studio	-	-	"The Pernicious Element"	-	-	Shkvarkin
			"The Bronze Idol"	-	-	Pavlov
Proletcult theatre	-	-	"Rubber"	-	-	Bivalli
The Big theatre	-	-	"The Red Poppy" (Ballet)	-	-	Gliere
			"Joseph the Beautiful"	-	-	Vasilenko
			"Love for Three Oranges"	-	-	Prokoviev
Operetta theatre	-	-	"The Bride Grooms"	-	-	Antimonov

PLAYS PERFORMED DURING THE TEN YEAR FESTIVAL, 1928

Moscow Art Academic theatre	-	-	"The Armoured Train"	-	-	Ivanov
Art Academic theatre II	-	-	"The Taking of the Bastille"	-	-	Romain Rolland
			"Death of Ivan the Terrible"	-	-	A. Tolstol
			"Egrave"	-	-	A. Falko
Vakhtangov theatre	-	-	"The Break"	-	-	Lavrenev
Trades Union theatre (M.G.S.P.S.)	-	-	"The Revolt"	-	-	Fourmanov
Meierhold's theatre	-	-	"A Window in the Country"	-	-	Akulshin
Theatre of Satire	-	-	"The House at the Cross- way"	-	-	Triger
Theatre of Revolution	-	-	"The Golgotha"	-	-	Tchijevski
The Proletcult theatre	-	-	"The Authority"	-	-	Gliebov
The Little theatre	-	-	"1917"	-	-	Souchanov

PLAYS PERFORMED IN LENINGRAD DURING 1927-28

- | | |
|---|-----------------------|
| 1. The End of Krivorilsk | B. Romashev |
| 2. The Wonder in a Sieve | A. Tolstol |
| 3. Hundred Thousands | A. Tolstol |
| 4. Taylor Wibbel | translation |
| 5. The Wolf's Night | translation |
| 6. The Career of Briggalin | E. Mirovitch |
| 7. Desire Under the Elms | O'Neill |
| 8. Lubov Yarovaia | Trenev |
| 9. The Sly Widow and Her Four Admirers | Goldoni, translated |
| 10. The Storm | Tsheglov |
| 11. The Time Will Come | Romain Rolland |
| 12. The Light-hearted Ekkegart | translation |
| 13. The Embezzlement | N. Lerner |
| 14. The Death of Pushkin (the King and the Poet) | N. Lerner |
| 15. Beethoven | Shishmor |
| 16. Calm | Bill-Belotserkovski |
| 17. Sir John Falstaff | translated by Nikitin |
| 18. Day and Night | Op. Lecocq and Mass |
| 19. Virinela | Seifulina |
| 20. The Treasure of Gentleman Sobakine | Archipov |
| 21. The Night of Mr. Foblase | N. Wenkotern |
| 22. Uncle's Lust | Aleksandrovitch |
| 23. The Ninth Wife of Tshulina | W. Trachtenberg |
| 24. The Mob | Shepovalenko |
| 25. Matress | Romashev |
| 26. The Trade of the Curate | Translation |
| 27. Roar, China! | S. Tretiakov |
| 28. Helen Tolpine | D. Tsheglov |
| 29. North-East | D. Tsheglov |
| 30. The Manufactory of Juvenility | A. Tolstol |
| 31. The Mine of Timoshkin | Makariev |
| 32. The Moon of the Left | Bill-Belotserkovski |
| 33. A Window in the Country | Akoulshin |
| 34. The Sisters Gerard ("The Two Orphans") | |
| 35. In the Year 1825 | N. Wekstern |
| 36. Rosita | A. Globl |
| 37. Cement | Gladkov |
| 38. The House at the Crossway | M. Triger |
| 39. Wanka-Kain | Dikgov-Derental |
| 40. Djouma-Mashid | Venezlanov |
| 41. The Red Poppy Ballet Music by Gliera and Kurilko | |
| 42. A Play with the Yoker, op. music Mikkelo and Cholmsky | |
| 43. The Bride-grooms | Antimonov |
| 44. Igoumenia Mitrofanina | Narimanov |
| 45. The Golden Ninth (The Booth of Angels) | |
| 46. The Moth | Waks & Mattern |
| 47. The Marketgirl of Cigarettes | Witalin |
| 48. The Heritage of Rabourdin, translated | C. Gorodezki |
| 49. The Bronze Idol | Pavlov |
| 50. A Kino-Roman | translated |
| 51. Grimaces | W. Karnouchova |
| 52. Wozzek, op. by A. Berg, translated by Kousmin | |
| 53. A Leap through the Shadow, op. K. Schenk, translated by S. Lewik | |
| 54. The Clown, op. by Kraus, translated by Gerken | |
| 55. Where They Dance Shimmy, op. by E. Gerken and W. Arezky | |

PLAYS PERFORMED DURING THE TEN YEAR FESTIVAL IN NOVEMBER, 1928

56. 1. The Conquest of Perekop	...	...	...	Trachtenberg & Mokin
2. The Armoured Train	...	...	...	V. Ivanov
3. The Ten Octobers by Andreef-Bashinsky and Tolmatshov	...	...	...
4. "1917"	...	...	...	N. Souchanov
5. The War	...	...	...	D. Fourmanoff & Polivanov
6. The Growth	...	...	...	A. Glebov
7. The Badgers	...	...	...	W. Leonov
8. The Break	...	...	...	B. Lavrenev

(H) SOME NEW BOLSHEVIST PLAYWRIGHTS WHO REPRESENT THE LITERARY FASHION IN RUSSIA

New authors strongly influenced by the new system of social life in Russia are increasingly making their appearance. The names of the principal ones together with the titles of their plays are as follows:

Bill-Belotserkovski:—"Storm"; "Calm"; "Port the Helm"; "Miners."

Kirshon:—"The Rails' Drone"; "Rjovchina"; "26 Commissars."

Kirshon and Ouspenski:—"Rust."

A. Glebov:—"Roles"; "Power"; "Zagmonk."

Romashev:—"The End of Krivorilsk"; "The Air Pie."

Falko:—"Boudous"; "Lake of Lyull"; "The Man with the Portfolio."

Erdman:—"Mandate."

S. Tretiakov:—"Roar, China!"; "Do You Hear, Moscow!"; "I Want a Baby!"

V. Ivanov:—"The Armoured Train"; "Blockade."

B. Lavrenev:—"Devastation"; "Tale of a Plain Thing"; "The Break."

Gladkov:—"Cement."

Bulgakov:—"The Day of the Turbines."

Trenev:—"Lubov Yarovaia."

Seifulina:—"Verineia."

* The best three plays.

Among these authors are temporisers and compromisers. Ivanov, for instance, handles partisan plays in compromising fashion. Red meat served up with White sauce. Such authors are suspect. The Reds want plays to put an end to the Whites.

3. EXTENSION OF BOLSHEVIST CULTURAL ACTIVITIES IN EUROPE AND AMERICA

To-day we are witnessing a remarkable extension of the bolshevist cultural programme in America, Western Europe and

England. It is being effected by exceptional and to some extent unexpected, methods and means. There are, for instance, The Intellectual Front against reaction, and against the censorship of Russian cultural productions, the newly-released Russian theatrical touring companies, and the Russo-British film combines, etc.

A. Not much need be said about the touring companies. Recently the Moscow State Jewish theatre, and the Vakhtangov theatre companies have made their first appearance in European cities; while directors including Meierhold, have visited these cities for the purpose of arranging tours. Three important theatrical companies have visited America :

1. The Moscow Art Academic theatre company under Stanislavski.

2. The Hebrew theatre, Habima, company of Moscow.

3. The Musical Studio of the Moscow Art Academic theatre, which produced a number of light operas, like "Carmencita," "Lysistrata," "The Daughter of Madame Angot," all belonging to the new or revolutionary path of the M.K.A.T. The two M.K.A.T. companies were "presented" in America by Mr. Maurice Guest.

B. The Intellectual Front against reaction constitutes a movement in which avowed European bolshevists (or self-styled communists) and extreme radicals are taking part. Its object is to cultivate the right state of mind for conceiving civilisation as the Russian bolshevists have conceived it, and to prevent converts to Marx-Lenin principles from slipping back into the "abyss."

The Intellectual Front against the censorship of Russian cultural products, is somewhat different, and somewhat confused and strange. In England, for instance, there is an Intellectual Front against the censorship of Russian films. The movement is supported by a fairly large number of intellectuals who consider that the technique of the new Russian revolutionary films

is the feature of the present epoch of the Kinema, and they have started a vigorous campaign in defence of this feature, with the object of getting all samples of it passed by the English Board of Film Censors. They ignore the social content and the propagandist sides of the films, and acclaim the æsthetic values. Says one writer, Robert Herring, "Russian films are no more propaganda than . . . the verse about miners in Keat's 'Pot of Basil.' They are pleas against stupidity. . . . You can call them art if you will. But art is a small word." This looks like drawing a white herring across the path of common sense. In any case it means that these intellectuals hate Russia and have no intention of recognising its definite film policy of Films for the enlightenment and liberation of the Mass. What they want is films for the elite.

Strangely enough this business of eyes and nose, seeing and sniffing incomparable æsthetic values in Russian films to the exclusion of the social content is shared by at least one English bolshevist film critic, who tells the weary Workers that he is engaged in the campaign against the censorship, that he recognises the propaganda value of the Russian films, but that he is a "purist" on the side of the intellectuals who recognise only the æsthetic value of the films, and that he warmly embraces these persons. What does Moscow think of this attitude?

C. This brings me to the matter of the Russian films and their world-wide distribution. The points I dealt with in my brief chapter on the Russian Kinema were: The Russian Government have a definite Kinema policy. They have recognised the social character of the film. The Kinema belongs to the collective social life, and bolshevist film producers, like Eisenstein and Pudovkin, have come forward to express the state of mind for the mass-production of a new Russia, for living in such a Russia, and for conceiving the mass-production of the sentiment of liberty. Further, the Government have recognised that the Kinema belongs to the theatre. It is capable of exhibiting those epic mass pictures which the theatre cannot

handle, of using the Mass itself as the gigantic heroic figure unfolding in space and time. But such pictures may have, and do in fact have, theatrical sequences. Another point is that the Government have the Kinema machinery under their control and supervision, and practically nothing is done with regard to film production distribution, either in Russia or abroad without their sanction. Again, films are produced for the foreign market. Their production is dictated by advertisement and money. They are intended to advertise the best side of the New Russia, as the Russian Ballet was originally sent abroad to advertise the best side of Imperialist Russia; and to put money in the Treasury purse.

I. RUSSIAN DISTRIBUTING AGENCIES IN AND OUT OF RUSSIA

A. Russia. In Russia to-day there is a net-work of production and distribution organizations, which have representatives abroad, in particular, in America and Germany. The names of the principal Russian Republic organisations are: (R.S.F.S.R.) 1, Sovkino (Moscow); 2, Vufku (Ukraine); 3, Goskinprom (Georgia); 4, Mejrabpom (Moscow); 5, Goskino (Leningrad); 6, Belgoskino (White Russia); 7, Turkmenkino (Turkmenistan); 8, Uzbezugoskino (Uzbekistan); 9, Armenkino (Armenia). By these and other production centres of the Federation there is a very large output of films, some for home, some for foreign consumption.

B. America. The Bolshevik Kinema Organisations 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8 are represented in America by the Amkino Corporation under the presidency of Mr. L. Monosson.

C. Germany. 1, "Photo-Kino" represents the entire film production of Russia and undertakes the distribution of films in Europe. 2, "Derussa" a Russo-German distributing society. 3, "Prometheus." Undertakes the editing of Russian films on a common agreement basis.

2. LISTS OF BOLSHEVIST FILMS THAT HAVE BEEN EXHIBITED ABROAD,
OR ARE TO BE EXHIBITED, OR ARE AWAITING PURCHASE

A. America. The following pictures have been released publicly in America:

"Potemkin," directed by S. M. Eisenstein; released December 5, 1926.

"Czar Ivan the Terrible," directed by Juri Tarich, starring L. Leonidov of the Moscow Art Theatre; released March 10, 1928.

"Bear's Wedding," directed by K. V. Eggert, with the director in the leading rôle; released May 20, 1927.

"The Station Master," with Ivan Moskvín; released June 16, 1928.

"Mechanics of the Brain," a scientific film of the Academician I. P. Pavlov's work on conditioned reflexes. (This film while exhibited mostly in colleges, was also shown in several public theatres with the most gratifying results); released in February, 1928.

"3 Comrades and 1 Invention," the first Soviet comedy released in the United States; date of release October 13, 1928.

"A Shanghai Document," a travelogue of China during the Revolutionary days; released October 13, 1928.

"10 Days that Shook the World," directed by Eisenstein, which was released in Russia under the title "October," released November 2, 1928; "October" was unsuccessful in Moscow, and is much inferior to "Potemkin."

"The Yellow Pass," directed by Ozep and starring Anna Stenn; released December 8, 1928.

To be released in America during 1929 a number of pictures including the following:

"Two Days," a Vufku production.

"Mother," based on Maxim Gorki's novel of that name.

"The Firebrand of the Volga" (Bulat Batir).

- "My Son."
- "Taras Shevchenko."
- "Zvenigora."
- "Katorga."
- "Two Armoured Cars."
- "General Policy," by Eisenstein and Tisse.
- "New Babylon."

No Russian directors have visited America. But Eisenstein may go shortly to direct a picture for the United Artists Corporation (Chaplin, Fairbanks, Pickford and Co.). This corporation is said to have united with big commercial corporations. Together they represent a capital of £20,000,000. But Mr. Chaplin denies it.

B. Germany. 1928 films:

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|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| "Palace and Fortress." | "Mussulmanca." |
| "Decabrists." | "The Girl from the Foreign Stream." |
| "9th January." | "The Soloist of the Tsar." |
| "Strike." | "Circle." |
| "Potemkin." | "Prison." |
| "October." | "Natella." |
| "Bed and Sofa." | "Elisso." |
| "Ivan the Terrible." | "Aviatics." |
| "Atonement." | "41th." |
| "The Way to Damascus." | "Waiter of the Palace Hotel." |
| "Wind." | "Mother." |
| "Family Skotninny." | "The Bear's Wedding." |
| "The League of the Great Action." | "His Majesty." |
| "Poet and Tzar." | "Tale of the Wood." |
| "Son of the Mountains." | "Two Days." |
| "Who Live upon the Street." | "The Fair of Sorotschinsk." |
| "Taras Trassilo." | "The Postmaster." |
| "The Process of the Three Millions." | "Moscow, How It Laughs and Weeps." |
| "The Ice Palace." | "Diplomatic Post." |
| "Taras Schevchenko." | "The Sold Appetite." |
| "Zvenigora." | "The Eleventh." |
| "Erring Stars." | |
| "Two Friends, Girl and Girl-friend." | |

1929 Programme.

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|--|---------------------------------|
| "New Babylon." | "The Prisoners of the Sea," &c. |
| "Storm Clouds Over Asia." | "The End of St. Petersburg." |
| "The General Policy. Eisenstein and Tisse." (The Bolshevik Government's general economic policy applied to the village.) | "The Yellow Pass." |
| "The Firebrand of the Volga" (Bulat Batir). | "My Son." |
| | "The Village of Sin." |
| | "The Captain's Daughter." |
| | "The White Eagle," &c., &c. |

There are no producers of Russian bolshevist films in Germany. The two companies Derussa and Prometheus are occupied with the production of films in association with Russian actors and stage-managers. Two films are now being produced in this manner, "The Living Corpse" and "Salamander."

C. France. "The Postmaster" and Ivan the Terrible have been shown publicly. A society called "The Friends of Spartacus" took part in the general campaign against the censorship of bolshevist films. It privately exhibited several including the revolutionary "Potemkin" and the extremely æsthetic "Aelita" a Martian pre-Potemkin fantasy in the production of which the artists Rabinovitch and Alexandra Exter took part. But the censorship has been too much for the F.O.S.

D. England. This country also has but a brief story to tell. The following bolshevist films have been exhibited in London:

"Polikushka." The first important film produced by the Russian Government in 1923. It was shown at the St. James' Theatre for a fortnight, the end of 1924 or commencement of 1925.

"Morosko." Shown for about a month at the Polytechnic theatre by Captain Noel in 1926.

"The Bear's Wedding." Trade shown early in 1927. Then released generally. Recently revived by the British Gaumont Company at the Shaftesbury Avenue Pavilion Kinema.

"The Postmaster." Trade shown early in 1928. Then released generally. Recently revived by the British Gaumont Company at the Shaftesbury Avenue Pavilion.

"Mother." Exhibited by the Film Society towards the close of 1928.

"The End of St. Petersburg." Exhibited by the Film Society in January, 1929. The latter had a Donnybrook Fair-like reception. The British "Reds" were in particular at their

best, or so "The Daily Chronicle" told me. I quote "The Daily Chronicle" because the Film Society has not yet caught up to civilisation in the matter of inviting independent critics to view their exhibitions.

"The Living Corpse." To be Trade shown and released by the Pro Patria Film Company in 1929. By all accounts there are "Sov-Kino" films held by persons in England, for example Messrs. Brunel and Montagu, who seek purchasers.

"Bed and Sofa." Exhibited by the Film Society at the New Gallery Kinema in April, 1929. Described by Mr. G. A. Atkinson of the "Daily Express" as "Moscow's most indecent film." But described by the Society as "dealing with the movement to raise the level of women by the humiliation of masculine selfishness."

"A Journey to Soviet Russia." Shown in 1929. A bolshevist travelogue illustrating the visit of the British Labour Delegation to Russia in 1927.

AMALGAMATIONS

1. The Russo-British Instructional Film Agreement signed April, 1929. Whereby the British Instructional secured the sole output of Russian films in England. The agreement provided for the co-operation of Russian film producers and actors in making films in England, and for the importation of Russian pictures like "The New Babylon," "The Women of Razan" and "The General Policy."

2. Russo-British Film Co-operation Agreement in March, 1929, between the British Photo-tone Company and the Mejrabpom and Prometheus Film Distributing Company, Berlin, to distribute and exploit silent and tone films. [Mejrabpom is a portmanteau word for International Workers' Help.]

4. EXTENSION OF BOLSHEVIST THEATRICAL SYSTEM IN THE EAST, ETC., LIST OF THEATRES

Throughout the six republics of Russia and beyond them the new theatrical system rolls on, overrunning theatres like a flood and tending to transform them to produce a social conversational element similar to that of the Moscow theatre. Each of the theatres of the six republics and the many autonomous districts are being reorganised on social lines and the method of rearrangement by cells is employed. For instance, the Tartar theatre at Kazan is under the bolshevists who are propagating Marxian ideas.

The six republics are :

1. The Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic (R.S.F.S.R.).
2. The White Russian Socialist Soviet Republic.
3. The Ukraine Socialist Soviet Republic.
4. The Uzbek Socialist Soviet Republic.
5. The Trans-Caucasian Socialist Soviet Republic.
6. The Turkmen Socialist Soviet Republic.

The number of autonomous districts that compose the Federated Soviet Union is very large, and their distribution covers a very wide area.

Among the transformed theatres are :

The Armenian.
The Erivan theatre (Tiflis).
The Georgian.
The Turkish theatre (Baku).
The Jewish theatres of the
Ukraine,
White Russia,
Bukharst (Central Asia).
Theatres in Kharkov, Odessa,
Kiev, Poltava, Tchernigov.

Tartar theatre.
Bashkir theatre.
Ukrainian theatre.
Berezil theatre of Kiev.
Tchuvash National theatre.
Yaroslav theatre
Turko-Tartar theatre (in Azer-
baijan).

ABROAD. The Japanese, Chinese and Bolshevik theatres are reacting on each other. The Heroic theatre of China, the ancient National theatre of Japan, "Kabuki," and the Japanese Art theatre have each visited Moscow, and there is an arrangement for sending bolshevist companies to both countries.

5. A NOTE ON ENGLISH INFLUENCED CLASSICS IN FAVOUR WITH THE BOLSHEVISTS

It is of interest to note that some of the authors of Russian classic plays and operas approved by the bolshevists were strongly influenced by English writers.

The following short list is taken from an article which appeared in *The Academy* of August 21st, 1915.

"Eugene Onegin"	Puskin influenced by Byron.
"Boris Godunov"	Pushkin influenced by Shakespeare.
	Lermontov, a Russian of Scottish descent, influenced by Byron.
	Gogol influenced by Dickens.
	Ostrovski influenced by Shakespeare.
	Turgenev shows French influences.
	Dostoevski influenced by Dickens and Hugo (French).
	Tolstoi influenced by Dickens.

The influence of Milton can be traced in some works.

6. BOLSHEVIST INFLUENCES ON THE ENGLISH, EUROPEAN AND AMERICAN THEATRES

Much could be written about the spreading influence of the New Russian theatre on people and institutions abroad. A brief note must however suffice here to indicate this tendency.

The influence is working principally through the intelligentsia, theatrical directors, insurrectionary authors, the industrial workers known as the proletariat and their intellectual supporters, etc.

It operates in three ways:

1. Through the intelligentsia who are strongly opposed to bolshevism, and are attracted by the "revolutionary" æsthetic which they find in its cultural expression. They repudiate the social revolution, deny that the plays and films are bolshevist propaganda, reject or apologise for the socialist content and acclaim the form. And for the sake of form they fight fiercely, in various ways, against the censorship that bans Russian plays and films. They are mainly technical specialists.

2. Through go-betweens. That is, bolshevists who work hand in hand with the intelligentsia and with Moscow. They fight for the widest distribution of Russian plays and films because of their revolutionary content; and because of their technical qualities which are so admired by the intelligentsia. They are a blend of bolshevist propagandist and intelligentsia technical specialist.

3. Through purely bolshevist agencies. That is, theatre directors, proletarian theatrical organisations that refuse to have any truck with the intelligentsia and the bolshevist compromisers. They stand mainly for bolshevist socialist content.

The influence comes from Russia through various channels, plays, touring companies, sympathetic visitors, exhibitions, Americans and Europeans who have worked in the New theatre.

TECHNIQUE

A. AMERICA. Found in the little experimental theatres, and endowed theatres like the Kenneth Sawyer Goodman Memorial theatre at Chicago. The mechanical setting for "Gas" was on Moscow lines. Also in proletarian theatrical organisations.

B. EUROPE. I have found the technical influence at work in most Continental cities, especially in experimental and state theatres. It was introduced to the Volksbühne by Piscator.

C. ENGLAND. It has been at work at the Gate theatre, and in proletarian or workers' theatrical organisations. Mr. Basil Dean appears to be searching for a new and more fluid technique. When producing "Pickwick" he expressed a desire for acrobatic actors. And in "The Chalk Circle" he used a revolving construction that suggested a Russian influence.

THEATRES

The best example of a bolshevised theatre in Europe was the Piscator-bühne in Berlin. The aim of the director Erwin

Piscator was to establish a model of Meierhold's theatre in Moscow. The experiment, though not successful, has aroused interest in Moscow methods and means. Piscator has revived his activities by the production of a war play called "Rivalen." The Gate theatre, London, is another example of a theatre powerfully influenced by the ideas of the Russian theatre. It has formed a channel through which these ideas have been passed on in this country.

PLAYS

Many bolshevist plays have been performed in Europe, in particular those by A. Lunacharski which have found their way to Berlin. Bolshevist tragedies and comedies seem to appeal to the Berliners. They are well received in Vienna.

Such plays have undoubtedly exercised a very powerful influence on German insurrectionists who came to the front during the short-lived Revolution in Germany in 1919. Since then the demand for their wares has almost ceased in Germany, but according to all accounts they are finding a new market in Russia. Thus Toller's "Hoppla" which caused excitement at Piscator's bolshevist theatre, travelled to Moscow. Thence it came to the Gate theatre, London. Hasenclever's "Antigone," and his godless play likewise went to Moscow. One of his experiments came to London where it found an early death.

A Bolshevist play red hot from Moscow has been performed in London. "Red Rust" by new young authors, Kirshon and Ouspenski, was produced at the Little theatre. Here the influence was contained not in technique but in content. It was an illustration of the expression of new practical sociology. "Rasputin," an historical play by A. Tolstoi, was performed by the London Stage Society.

Russian influence may be traced in the subjects of Russian plays performed in this country. Several subjects have been those approved by the Bolshevist authorities for representation in

the Russian theatre. I will take one example only, "Such Men are Dangerous," adapted by Mr. Ashley Dukes and produced by Mr. Matheson Lang. The central figure is Paul I, who happens to be on the list of Autocratic Tsars marked down as objects for bolshevist contumely. It was adapted from the original by Alfred Neumann. In pointing this out I have no intention to suggest that the English adaptor and producer were acting under Russian influence. I am concerned only with the fact that play subjects which are the fashion in Moscow have apparently taken the fancy of numerous authors outside Moscow. They exercise a Russian influence through being repulsive to audiences both in Moscow and abroad.

7. A NOTE ON THE ILLUSTRATIONS AND THE PRESENT-DAY USE OF COLOUR IN THE RUSSIAN THEATRE

The illustrations are selected to show the newer technical tendencies in the New Russian theatre and Kinema. The first include concrete realism and stage cinematography. Constructions are seen to be dictated by the interpretative movement of the actor, as well as by the elements of speed and variety that characterise Russian social life to-day.

It would seem according to Madam Alexandra Exter, to whom I am much indebted for permission to reproduce one of her colour drawings in this book, that there is a "construction" formula. Given that the intensity of the emotion of the play (tragedy, comedy, etc.) is strictly subordinated to the essential intensity of the "construction," it is necessary that this construction be conceived for the emotional movement. It should be understood that this formula is not definitive. It is a true one according to the limited possibilities of the theatre to-day. But to-morrow it will be rejected when the "ideal" scene can be realised admitting of multiple changes. But until

this "ideal" scene arrives, the existing one should profit by the possibilities of change which electric light offers. In the domain of colour electric lighting on the stage can work wonders. It can be used to assist in realising all the emotional effects.'

This raises the question of the use of colour in the New Russian theatre which does not yet possess the elaborate and costly electrical technical equipment found in the up-to-date theatres of Western Europe and America. Most of us know by this time of the extraordinary technical inventions in Germany by Schwabe, Laslo and others, which have promoted light to the position of an actor. The Russian theatre has not yet entered upon the Appian way and it must therefore seek colour in another direction. Colour is got in the Academic theatres by the use of coloured textures. It is brought on by the actors and arranged in mixed masses or set moving against neutral backgrounds. Except in the Moscow Art Academic theatre which has not changed in the matter of settings, there is no painted scenery. The Left Wing theatres including Meierhold's do not trouble about æsthetic effects. They stage actual working-class life, transfer the Mass in its drab work-a-day costumes straight from the street and workshop to a stage containing an equally drab setting constructed solely for acting purposes. The directors of these theatres regard the remains of æsthetic trimmings to which the directors of academic theatres cling, with scorn. Meierhold composes scenes in black and white with great skill. By means of the bare walls of the stage and the limited light at his disposal he sometimes achieves Rembrandtesque effects of great richness. But he dresses his company in real life clothes. Lack of money has led the directors of the Russian theatre to invent striking and novel "colour" effects. Whether they will make any advance when they are in a position to use European and American lighting inventions, is doubtful. The need of strict economy and absence of materials have worked technical wonders in the New Russian theatre.

8. A NOTE ON THE PRESENT-DAY HOPELESS CONFUSION IN WORDS AND TECHNICAL TERMS TO WHICH BOLSHEVIST RUSSIA HAS CONTRIBUTED

In the preface to this book I have called attention to the difficulties to be met in undertaking to write a book like the present one. A very real difficulty is that of using a language that shall convey a single and simple meaning to all. This is made almost impossible by the general lack of understanding of the value of the science of words; by the general habit of using words inappropriately and with no knowledge of their primary, metaphysical and metaphorical senses; by the habit of bringing new words continuously into our language, and giving old ones new or double meanings which they will not bear. We have to consult only the newspapers to find abundant evidence of the hopeless confusion in words, the utter failure to discriminate between dead and living ones. Look for instance at the misuse of the terms Art, Drama, Spirit. Few words are more misused.

This difficulty of using appropriate words is increased by having to use new words brought into the English language by the Russian Revolution, and subsequent political, economic and social events. Here an almost hopeless confusion has been set up by the use of these words as weapons of attack and ridicule. For example Bolshevism, Soviet, Communist, Comrade, Reds, have come into general use as words of censure and their application may have a very damaging effect. Another source of confusion is the indiscriminate use of say Bolshevism, Communism, Soviet, as current terms all describing one thing—Russia and its new system of associative government and industrial and social life. Of course they do not. I think that properly speaking, the word Bolshevism has determined the New Russia, the primary sense of the word, majority rule, Mass rule, let me say, is what distinguishes that country and its activities from those abroad. Neither Communism nor Soviet are select and determinate words. They have old and confused meanings.

The Russian habit of manufacturing portmanteau words, the changes in the Russian alphabet, the translation and transliteration problems, all help to increase the difficulty of writing a book like this without verbal confusions.

9. A NOTE ON THE THEATRE TENDENCY TO-DAY THAT WE MUST STUDY
AND PROMOTE

An object of the present volume is to direct attention to an important tendency in the Theatre to-day that demands to be studied. The tendency is towards the removal of that separation between the Theatre and human life set up by two opposing currents set in motion by two different men, the one an Irishman, a thinking man actuated by reason, alone, the other an Englishman, an unthinking man actuated by emotion alone. The first possessed an understanding of the economic values of social life, but had no vision of the theatre, the second had a vision of the theatre, but no understanding of social life and the true cultural needs of the people. The first was an individualistic socialist who had his own views of society to express, the second was an æsthete with a head full of space called a theatre and no capacity for making it a vehicle of human thought and action. In other words, the one possessed purposes of worldly interest, but no proper place to exhibit them, the other possessed a box with nothing to put in it.

The present aim of all interested in the Theatre should be to establish the proper relationship between the two, between an intelligent understanding of collective life and the great vehicle of such understanding. To establish, that is, a unity of a vision of the Theatre and a vision of the visions of social life which belong to the Theatre.

I shall venture no further than this to intimate the chief cause of the breach in the Theatre during the early part of this century. In these pages I have avowed my belief in unity and further have produced proof of its existence in one country at

least. Those who read these pages will not fail to find proof likewise.

10. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have but two acknowledgments to make, and I make them gladly. This book is my own work entirely; I have received no assistance, clerical or other, with the two exceptions that I shall mention. Whatever praise or blame it invites will come to me. Without doubt I shall receive a full share of the latter. It is too much to believe that the old unhappy prejudice against Russian cultural institutions, and against the idea of the transformation of the Theatre from an æsthetic plaything into a social playground, has been entirely replaced with a happier feeling. Still, I shall not mind. My book gives to the world my views about the theatre, my faith in it as a social regenerator, my belief that it is fundamentally a temple in which human beings may experience fine spiritual experience, and can lay the foundation of a fine Social Faith. And it gives to the world an analysis and synthesis of a model of the Theatre undergoing transformation. The composition of the model is shown to be a union of workshops in which High Priests and technical specialists are busy with the elements of a New Social Faith in liberty its means and end, and a Belief in science, natural, human and social, conceived by the bolshevists. Whether this particular Faith and this Belief must be generally accepted, I do not know. But I know that the Russian theatre has taken to expressing human Faith and Belief of an exalting character, unlike the theatres abroad in which the priests and technicians are sworn to the worship of Mammon.

In conclusion I offer my sincere thanks to Anatol Lunacharski, the bolshevist Minister for Education and Art, for granting me the exceptional privilege of free entry to all the theatres and kinemas of Moscow and Leningrad. I say exceptional privilege because such a privilege does not exist outside

Russia. In countries like England where the control of the theatre is a many-sided one, that is, exercised by powerful syndicates and private owners, the independent critic like myself who seeks to obtain by first-hand observation* material with which to compile contemporary historical records, is usually in a bad way, unless he be a Cræsus. He has to grovel on his knees for favours, and generally receives refusals, and is made the object of sneers, snubs, insults and contumely by the lesser servants of the theatre magnates and managers.

My best thanks are due also to theatre directors in Moscow and Leningrad, including Stanislavski, Meierhold, Tairov and Granovski for photographs illustrating their important achievements. But I trust that my thanks are fully conveyed to the Builders generally, by the body of the book which I have endeavoured to make a fair and, I hope, lasting guide to their activities in the matter of building the New theatre.

I. NAME INDEX

1. PERSONS AND PLACES.

A

Alexander I, 10, 284, 286
 Alexander II, 11, 259, 286
 Andrelev, Leonid, 59
 Appia, Adolf, 67
 Aleikhem, Sholom, 91
 Altmann, Nathan, 97-99, 129, 187
 Arvantov, 129
 Alexseef, A. G., 155
 Ansky (Rappaport), S., 184
 Akulschin, Rodiona, 222
 Aristophanes, 253
 Añnogenov, 257
 Arcos, 266

B

Blok, Alexander, 59, 65, 67, 168
 Bakst, 64, 153
 Berdichev, 91
 Byron, Lord, 111
 Bagdanaf, 127
 Bikov, A. V., 156
 Bjornsen, 160
 Bizet, 169, 253
 Borodin, 171
 Beethoven, 173, 242
 Bach, 173
 Bim and Bom, 180
 Büchner, 190
 Bulgakov, 214, 249-50
 Boughton, Rutland, 244
 Ryvoll, 257
 Bill-Belotserkovski, 258-60

C

Chesterton, G. K., xiv, 86, 227-29
 Catherine II, 10
 Constantine, Grand Duke, 10
 Claudel Paul, 86, 223, 227
 Conway, Sir Martin, 41
 Chekov, A. P., 53, 54, 104, 106, 112-3, 160, 166
 Cherson, 54
 Crommelynck, Fernand, 74, 76, 90
 Chagal, Marc, 99, 129
 Cronegk, 102

Capek, Karel, 119, 152
 Chaikov, 129
 Chekov, M. A., 157
 Cinquivalli, 179
 Chopin, 214
 Cockchafer, The, 216
 Carr, Philip, 226
 Charpentier, 242
 Cochran, C. B., 244

D

D'Annunzio, Gabriel, 64
 Dostoevski, F. M., 104, 110-11
 Dreiser, Theodor, 122
 Dean, Basil, 139, 217, 221
 Diaghelev, 153
 Depero, 154
 Delibes, 171
 Dickens, C., 173, 240
 Dukes, Ashley, 174
 Denekin, General, 246

E

Evreinov, Nicholas, 17, 155
 Eisenstein, S. M., see Kinema, 77, 118, 129, 130, 179, 284-6, 288, 290
 Ehrenburg, I., 212
 Erdman, Nicholas, 213
 Exter, Alexandra, 290

F

Fishon, Abraham, 91
 Foregger, N. M., 118, 129, 153-6, 170, 204
 Fedorovski, 129, 169
 Fokin, Michel, 153
 Faiko, A., 213, 252

G

Gregory, Johannes, 13
 Gogol, N. V., 15, 104, 112, 166, 213, 219, 238, 245
 Gorki, Maxim, 15, 104, 113, 137
 Granovski, Alexis M., 38, 87-100, 104, 117, 235-9, 254

Gluck, C. W., 64
 Golovin, A. Y., 65
 Goldfaden, Abraham, 89
 Gutzkow, Karl, 95
 Gofman, 127
 Gan, 129
 Gorohov, 135
 Gemier, Firmin, 139
 Glinka, M. I., 171
 Grein, J. T., 174
 Gautier, 179
 Goldoni, Carlo, 190
 Griboyedov, A. S., 219
 Globi, 234
 Gladkovski, 243
 Gliere, 243
 Gladkov, 259

H

Harris, Sir Augustus, 58
 Hoffmannsthal, Von, 61
 Hoffman, Amadeus, 86, 87
 Harvey, Sir John Martin, 139
 Holitscher, Arthur, 145
 Haideburov, P. P., 158-61
 Hugo, Victor, 168
 Hasenclever, Walter, 234
 Hermitage, The, 41

I

Ivananov, V., 17
 Italy, 54
 Ibsen, 57, 104-5
 Ivanov, Viatcheslav, 139

J

Jakulov, 129, 153, 244

K

Kerenski, 3, 146-8
 Kergentsev, P. M., 35, 123, 129
 Kommissarzhevski, Vera, 57, 59-62
 Katchalov, V. I., 111
 Kamienski, 129
 Konchalovski, 129
 Kandinski, 129
 Konenkov, 129
 Klabund, 221
 Krepusko, 257
 Kataev, 270

L

Lenin, 3, 19, 27, 39, 41, 44, 136, 146-7,
 163, 173, 195, 197, 207, 240, 237, 236
 Lunacharski, A. V., 37-46, 51, 78-80,
 115, 117, 121, 123, 129, 163-4, 169,
 203, 239-44, 245, 247
 Landa, M. J., 88
 Lecocq, Charles, 111, 226, 253
 London, Jack, 127

Lentulov, 129
 Lavinsky, 129
 Liszt, 214
 Laver, James, 221
 Lermontov, 227
 Lopukov, V., 243
 Leonov, Leonid, 249, 270

M

Meierhold, V., 13, 16, 31, 36, 38, 39,
 46-78, 80-1, 88, 89, 90, 104-5, 115, 118,
 129, 139, 143, 153, 155, 183, 196, 202-
 4, 209-22, 235, 245, 254, 257, 265, 267,
 270
 Mozart, 242
 Moussorgski, 242, 253
 Milton, 281
 Mikhailovitch, Tsar, Alexis, 13
 Marx, Karl, 19, 27, 44, 136, 163, 240,
 242, 296, 298
 Maeterlinck, Maurice, 55-8, 60, 160
 Molière, 63, 190
 Maiaikovski, Vladimir, 66, 75, 222
 Martine, 77
 Mamontov, 125-6
 Morossov, 128
 Morris, William, 152
 Muck, 154
 Marinetti, 154
 Medtner, 172
 Marienhof, 227

N

Nicholas I, 11, 28, 286
 Nicholas II, 247, 286
 Nepmen, 21-2, 189
 Nemirovich-Dantchenko, V. I., 52,
 101, 108-10, 251
 Nijinski, V., 153

O

Ostrovski, A. N., 15, 65, 90, 112, 131,
 190, 211, 227, 229-32
 Oriel (Clown), 179
 O'Neill, Eugene, 223-4, 232, 234
 Offenbach, Jacques, 253

P

Pugatchev, 10, 141, 250
 Peter the Great, 13
 Pshibuishevski, S., 60, 65
 Pavlov, Professor, 70, 206
 Pletnev, V., 118, 127, 129, 201, 204
 Prosvietov, 129
 Pevchener, 129
 Prokoviev, 153, 172
 Picabia, 154
 Pascas, Henriette, 173-7
 Penskom, 185
 Poel, William, 189
 Pilcher, Velona, 217-8

Pantheon, The, 225
 Perez, I. L., 237, 247
 Pulver, 238
 Prussak, 243
 Platon, 246

R

Razin, Stenka, 10, 141
 Reinhardt, Max, 56, 59, 60, 73, 189, 235
 Racine, 86
 Rabinovitch, J., 94, 251
 Reinsner, 129
 Radlov, 129
 Rodchenko, 129
 Rievdel, 129
 Ruskin, John, 152
 Rimski-Korsakov, N. A., 171, 242, 253
 Rossini, 171
 Rachmaninov, 172
 Rolland, Romain, 190
 Romansev, 214
 Reich Zenaïde, 220
 Romain, Jules, 238
 Rakovski, 226

S

Stanislavski, C. S., 13, 38, 53, 54, 79, 90, 100-114, 117, 182, 189, 203-4, 248-51, 254
 Stockmann, Dr., 220, 222
 Shaw, George Bernard, 232-4
 Stuckel, Edward, 240
 Sukanov, 246
 Souhker-Ber-Ribak, 248
 Seifullina, L., 248
 Sologub, Fedor, 17, 61
 Smyschlaiev, V., 36, 129
 Schnitzler, Arthur, 56
 Strauss, 61
 Sapunov, 64
 Shakespeare, 105, 160, 188, 281
 Sherwood, Anderson, 122
 Shtevchenko, 129
 Shterenberg, 129
 Skarskala, N. F., 158-9
 Schiller, 168, 190
 Sanin, 169
 Serov, 171
 Smolen, 214
 Schumann, 214

T

Tairov, Alexander, 13, 16, 33, 67, 78-87, 88-90, 104-5, 117, 159-60, 166, 223-35, 236, 254
 Tolstoi, L. N., 15, 104-5, 113, 160
 Treplef, 53
 Tuzenbach, Baron, 53

Tiflis, 54-6
 Tree, Sir Herbert, 57
 Turgenev, I. S., 113
 Tolstoi, Alexis, 113, 160, 202
 Trotski, L., 121, 125, 186, 266
 Tichmovisch, 129
 Tchemax, N. L., 182
 Treliakov, S., 216
 Tchaikovsky, 253

V

Vakhtangov, Y., 13, 89, 182-4
 Volkov, Fyodor, 14
 Verhaeren, Emile, 74
 Vermicheev, 126
 Vermischev, 129
 Vesnin, 227

W

Wedekind, Frank, 60-1
 Wilde, Oscar, 65, 85
 Wagner, 63, 104, 244
 William II, 235

2. THEATRES.

A

Alexandrinski, 63, 64
 Art theatres, 107
 Academic theatre, Museum, 244

C

Court or Professional, 13
 Commercial, 13
 Conditional, 54, 55, 59, 62
 Chatâlet, 64
 Club, 137-8

D

Dance, Little Satirical, 153
 Dramatic, New, 204, 221

E

Experimental, 13
 Ermitage, 190-1

F

Free, 102
 Factory, 137

H

Habima (Hebrew), 17, 64, 89, 181-7
 His Majesty's, 57
 Drury Lane, 58

J

Jewish (Russia), 188
 Jewish (Yiddish) Moscow State, 87-

100, 181, 235-9, 247, 269
 Jewish (Hebrew), see Habima, Old
 Jewish
 Jewish, Bukarest
 Jewish, State of White Russia, 247

K

Kamerny, Moscow State, 78-87, 155,
 159, 223-85, 290
 Korsh, 189
 Kabuki (Japanese), 221
 Kinema, 65, 277-91

L

Labour, xvi
 Little Crooked Jimmy, 155
 Leningrad State, 173

M

Moscow Art Academic, 15, 52, 53, 57,
 100-14, 183, 188, 190, 199, 246, 248-51,
 267, 270
 Mass, 30-1, 34-7, 66, 259-60, 283
 Mass, Little, 131-8
 Mass, Big (Open-air), 138-49
 Mass and Pageantry, 138-9
 Mystic, 4, 56, 58
 Marionette, 60
 Marinski, 64, 243
 Meierhold's, 46-78, 90, 117, 209-22
 Mass, Roman, 138-9
 „ Greek, 138-9
 „ Middle Age, 138-9
 „ Renaissance, 138-9
 Mastfor, 155-6
 Moscow State, 173
 Moscow Little State, 244-7
 Moscow Big State, 155-70

N

Neo-realistic, 82-7
 N.E.P., 189
 Nezlobina, 190

O

October, 66
 Operetta, 190
 Opera House, 243

P

Proletcult, 36, 120-31, 149-51, 155, 166,
 179, 254-7

R

Russian, Dramatic (Korsh), 189
 Revolution, Theatre of, 257-8

S

State Children's, 178-7, 247
 State Academic, 199
 State Circus, 177-80
 Satire, Theatre of, 247

T

T.E.O., 65, 74
 Travelling, 156-60
 Tram, 204, 261
 Trades Union Dramatic, 204, 258-60,
 286

V

Vakhtangov, 204, 239, 247-8, 269

Z

Zemnie, 191

3. PLAYS.

A

Acrobats, The, 54
 Antonia, 60
 Awakening of Spring, The, 60
 Antigone, 104, 234
 Awakening, The, 127
 Avenger, The, 127
 Agony, 157
 Adventure of Madam Segal, The,
 238
 Adrian Van-Bower's Marriage, 240
 About Love, 248
 Armoured Train, The, 249-50, 267
 Across the Abyss, 257
 Alexander III, 236

B

Balaganchik, 59, 60-1
 Brothers Karamazov, 104
 Beyond Human Power, 160
 Between Two Worlds, 184
 Bitterness From Wisdom, 219-20
 Bubus (see Teacher Bubus)
 Bug, The (Klop), 222
 Bear's Wedding, The, 245
 Break, The, 267

C

Cry of Life, 56
 Cain, 111, 249
 Cherry Orchard, The, 160, 167
 Carnival of Life, The, 161
 Cricket on the Hearth, 173
 Cenci, The, 190
 China and Japan, Plays of, 221
 Chalk Circle, The (Chang-Hui-
 Tang), 221
 Children's Homes, The, 137, 238
 Calm, 259, 260

D

Death of Ivan the Terrible, The, 54, 160
 Death of Tintagel, The, 55, 56
 Don Juan, 63
 Dorian Gray, 65
 Dybbuk, The, 72, 184, 187, 247
 Dawn, The, 74-5, 166
 Death of Tarelkin, The, 77
 Daughter of Madam Angot, The, 111, 249
 Dawn of Proletcult, The, 127
 Dream of the First of May, The, 127
 Danton, 190
 Destruction of Europe, The (D.E.), 212
 Desire Under the Elms, 223-4, 234
 Don Quixote Released, 241
 Day of the Turbins, The, 246, 249, 250, 254, 265
 Doll's House, A, 238
 Defrauder, The, 270

E

Eternal Story, The, 60
 Electra, 61, 64
 Earth Prancing, 77, 143
 Ekaterinburg, 127
 Enough Stupidity in Every Wise Man, 131
 Eternal Jew, The, 185
 Eric XIV, 188
 Enemy of Society, An, 220, 222
 Egraf Seeks Adventure, 252
 End of Krivorolsk, The, 258
 1881, 259

F

Famira Kithared, 84
 Forest, The, 90, 211, 221
 Fool and His Majesty the People, The, 179
 Flood, The, 188

G

Ghosts, 56, 104
 Gold Shares, 91
 Gossips, The, 99
 God Asleep, 127
 Girofle-Girofla, 225
 Granary, The, 245

H

Hedda Gabler, 57
 Hadebuk (Dybbuk), 184
 Hairy Ape, 224, 232

I

Insurance Agent, The, 99
 Igeevsky Works, 127

Impossible, 127
 Ivanov, 166
 Ivan Kozyr, 245
 In the Ranks, 257

J

Jesus from Notre Dame, 248

K

King Harlequin, 85
 Kuldunie, 92
 Kukirol, 232
 Karotyskaia Revolution, 248

L

Little Booth, 59
 Life of Man, 59
 Lower Depths, The, 104, 113-4
 Lena, 127
 Liberation of Labour, The, 143
 Le Roi S'Amuse, 168
 Lake of Lyull, The, 212
 Lawyer of Babylon, The, 226
 La Tosca, 235
 Lubov Yarovaia, 245-6, 250
 Little Communist, The, 247
 Lysistrata, 251
 Lake of Ozero, The, 258

M

Midsummer Night's Dream, A, 55
 Mystery Bouffe, 66, 75-6, 143
 Magnificent Cuckold, The, 74, 76, 90, 153
 Man Who Was Thursday, The, 86, 224, 227-9, 285
 Meiningen (Players), 102, 104
 Mexican, The, 127
 Master, 127
 Mangy Dog, The, 133
 Malva, 137
 Miracle of St. Antony, The, 160
 Mandate, 213, 215-6
 Masquerade, 227
 Marriage of Figaro, The, 249

N

Night, 77
 Nutcracker, 175-7
 Night in the Old Market, 237
 Notre Dame de Paris, 245
 1917, 245-6, 267
 Nicholas I, and Decabrists, 249
 Noose, The, 257

O

Over the Top, 127
 Once in an Evening, 135
 On the Chain of Confession, 247

P

Pisanella, 64
 Phœdre, 80, 86, 223, 225
 Princess Brambilla, 86, 225
 Passer-by, The, 185
 Passions Enchained, 137
 Power of Darkness, The, 160, 187
 People, The, 169, 240
 Power of Parentage, The, 186
 Poison, 240
 Politics of Mr. Dawn, The, 243
 Pugatchevskena, 249
 Path in the Road, The, 257

R

Ransom of Life, The, 64
 Romeo and Juliet, 86, 160, 223-5
 Revizor, 104, 112, 213, 218, 238, 245, 249
 Revolutionary Plays, Cycle of, 126
 Red Year Cycle, 126
 Red Truth, The, 126
 Red Star, The, 127
 Ruy-Blas, 168
 Roar, China! 155, 216-19
 Rozita, 224, 234
 Rubber, 257

S

Seagull, The, 53, 106
 Sister Beatrice, 57-8, 60
 Scarf of Columbine, The, 63, 64
 Storm, The (see Tempest), 65
 Strong Man, The, 65
 Sakuntala, 84, 223
 Salome, 85, 223
 Senor Formica, 87, 226
 Sorceress, The, 91, 93, 236
 Strikes, 127
 Shark, The, 127
 Storming of the Winter Palace, The, 143-49
 Storm, 227, 258, 260
 Saint Joan, 232-4
 Steer to the Left, 245

T

Tempest, The (see The Storm), 227, 229-32
 Three Sisters, The, 53
 Tintagel, 56
 Tidings Brought to Mary, The, 86, 223, 227
 200,000, 91, 236
 Tally Man, The, 99
 Tsar Feodor, 104, 113, 188
 Two Orphans (Sisters Gerard), 111, 252
 Tower, The, 127

Theatre of the Soul, The, 155
 Tales of Scarabee, The, 156
 Two, 157
 Tom Sawyer, 175
 Turandot, 183
 Taming of the Shrew, The, 188
 Teacher Bubus (see Bubus), 213, 22
 Tenth Commandment, The, 238
 Travels of Benjamin III, The, 239
 Trouadek, 238
 Trouadek's Marriage, The, 239
 Tsar of All Russia, 243
 Taking of the Bastille, The, 267

U

Unknown, The, 65-67
 Uriel Acosta, 91, 95-8
 Uncle Vanya, 112
 Untilovsk, 249, 270

V

Victory of Death, The, 61
 Vampire, 61
 Village Stepanchikovo, The, 111
 Velvet and Rags, 240, 245
 Virinea, 248

W

William Tell, 168
 Window in the Country, A, 222, 267
 Wayside Inn, The, 245

4. OPERA, MUSIC AND BALLET.

Rose of Brazil, 214
 O Nile, 214
 Buddha, 214
 Dancing of the Honeymoon, 214
 Dardanella, 214
 Louise, 242
 Legend of the Invisible City of Kitesh, 242
 Adrienne Lecouvreur, 7
 Le Pas d'Acier, 153
 The Life of the Tsar, 242
 Eugene Onegin, 242
 Lohengrin, 170, 173, 242
 Orpheus, 64
 Tristan and Isolde, 63
 Love for Three Oranges, The, 244
 Rienzi, 244
 Carmen, 169
 BOLSHEVIST.
 Smerch, 243
 Red Leningrad, 243
 Djibella (Ballet), 243
 Robespierre, 243
 Red Poppy, The, 243
 Musical Studio. Nemirovich-Danchenko, 253
 Carmencita and Soldier

Madam Angot (Lecocq)
 Pericola (Offenbach)
 Lysistrata (Aristophanes)
 Stanislavski State Opera Studio, 253
 Tsar's Bride (Rimski-Korsakov)
 Eugene Onegin (Tschaikovski)
 A Night in May
 Boris Gudonov (Moussorgski)

5. DRAMATIC SOCIETIES, CIRCLES AND STUDIOS.

Alexeev Circle, 101
 Society of Art, 101
 Clubs :
 Trades Union, 134-8
 Soldiers, 137
 Factory, 137
 Studios :
 Gorki, 137
 Meierhold, 55
 Improvisation, 64
 Jewish, 182
 Moscow Art Theatre, 187-9, 252-3
 Peasant Dramatic Circles, 138
 Independent Club and Factory

theatre, 138
 Blue Blouse, 204, 261

6. KINEMA.

The Decembrists, 284, 288
 Potemkin, 284-5, 288
 General Policy (Line), 284, 291
 Berlin, 285
 End of St. Petersburg, 285
 Soviet Steps, 288, 289
 Ten Days That Shook the World
 (October), 288
 Dety Boory, 288
 The Steel Arm, 289
 Aelita, 290
 Mother, 291
 Eisenstein, S. M., 77, 118, 129, 130,
 179, 284-6, 288, 290
 Producers, 290
 Exter, A., 290
 School of Experiment Feks, 289

7. RADIO.

Societies, 294
 Friends of Radio, 294

2. SUBJECT INDEX

The main subjects are given in the Contents Table and in the analytical sectional and sub-sectional headings throughout the book. The Subject Index is designed to show the relationship between a life-centred society organised on a bolshevist plan and a life-centred theatre reflecting that plan. It suggests the wide practical sociological possibilities of the Theatre, and the sociological function it can fulfil for man to-day if properly organised to do so. If it be recognised that we are living in an age of practical sociology, the function cannot be overestimated.

THE NEW SOCIETY AND ITS BOLSHEVIST IDEOLOGY

(For Plan see Chapter 3 on Contemporary Materials.)

This materialistic ideology is fully analysed on pages 206-7. A full classification of the subjects is as follows:

A.—MENTAL AND MORAL SCIENCES.

- Philosophy. Mass, 11. The New Social Pyramid, 18-9, 107.
- Metaphysics. Liberation, 5-6. French Revolution, 9. Marxist, 9.
- Religion (or Faith) Theology is not recognised. Faith in Bolshevism, 11. Deification of Great Men. Lenin, etc.
- Ethics (and Morals). Collectivism, Good. Individualism, Evil. Mass-preservation is Good. Self-preservation without regard to Mass necessities is Evil.

B.—NATURAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES.

- Sociology (Mass-Man in Society).
- Psychology (or Psycho-Sociology). Thinking in terms of the Mass.
- Biology (or Bio-Sociology). Living in terms of the Mass.
- Education. Cultural. See Lunacharski's summary of the principles of the Government Department of the theatre, 44-6.
- Commissions and Censorship, 46.
- Circus as Government Censor, 177.
- „ Aesthetic, 85, 46.
- „ Proletarian, The. What is he?, 121-3.
- Women. Position of. Bolshevist Citizens equal to men.
- „ Employment. Social Service.
- „ Duties. Ditto
- Children. Bolshevist Citizens in the making. Extreme care of.
- Relations of Sex. Removal of Sex taboos. Regarded from the new Socio-economic approach.

Courtship. Regarded from the new Socio-economic approach.
Marriage. New type of Ditto.
Family. Ditto.
Divorce. Ditto.

C.—MECHANICAL SCIENCE.

The Machine. Its national importance to the present epoch of mechanical, industrial and agricultural sciences, 69. Agriculture on collective mechanical lines. Propagation of large scale collective industrialisation according to latest technical methods.* Lenin's scheme of electrification, 118.

D.—SCIENCE OF GOVERNMENT.

Summaries of political, economic and social events, 1917-22, 73; 1923-28, 265-270.

State. Concepts of, Bolshevik, Soviet, Associative, Co-operative. See Chapter 3.

Politics. Forms and Parties.

Socialism. Russian, Narodnaia Volia, 10.

Social-Democracy.

Mensheviks, 11.

Bolsheviks, 11, 12.

Communism. Marx, 10-12, 27, 41, 45. Materialistic Conception of History, 162-3. See Name Index.

Bolshevism. Lenin, 18, 27. Gospel of, 163. Doctrine of materialism, 239. See Name Index.

Collectivism, 18.

Imperialism, 11.

International.

War, 19, 73.

Revolution, The. Concepts and ideas are dealt with throughout the book.

Diplomatic Relations. See in particular, 265-9.

„ **Reconciliation.** Ditto.

„ **Rupture.** Ditto.

Trade, 265-9.

Peace and Disarmament, 23, 265-9.

National.

Civil War, 19. See Part I and II.

Class-War. Definition, ideas and principles throughout the book.

Reconstruction and Production. See 118, 196-7, 200.

Economic. See Economic Plan, Chapter III.

Industrial (Scientific).

Social.

THE THEATRE AND BOLSHEVIST IDEOLOGY.

Old Content.

Concepts and Formative Political and Social Influences prior to 1917.
 As Church ix, xi. As play-space for model of heaven, xii. Court and aristocratic, 13. Semi-commercial and experimental, 15. Commercial, Western European and American commercialised civilisation and sex, 15.

New Content.

Concept.

New Spirit, xix.

Political. A political, military, economic and cultural machine, 5.

Survey of Bolshevik ideology, 206-7.

Themes.

Socialism (Marxism). State (Old Imperial) theatres and Opera houses under Lunacharski.

Bolshevism (Leninist). All plays since 1919 exhibit the bolshevist concept of government and society.

Sovietism. Soviet Village and Factory plays. "A Window in the Country," 222, 267. See Proletcult Plays, "The End of Krivovitsk," 258.

Collectivism. Mass plays. See Big and Little Mass theatres.

Individualistic. Presented in terms of Collectivism. See "Saint Joan," "Hairy Ape."

Imperialism. See M.A.T., M.K.T., Theatre of Revolution, Melerhold's theatre plays, particularly in the second period. Anti-aristocratic and anti-monarchical, "Tsar Feodor," "Decembrists," "Rozita," "Roar, China!" &c.

International.

War. See State (Old Imperial) theatres and Opera Houses, Melerhold's theatre: "Mystery Bouffe," the destruction of the world save a few pioneers.

Revolution. See Melerhold's theatre; Theatre of Revolution; Tairov's and Stanislavski's later plays.

Reconciliation. Reconciliation of Peasant and Town Worker. Relations between Town and Country. See Club theatres, Little Mass plays. Also "Earth Prancing"; "The End of Krivovitsk," 258.

Diplomatic Relations.

Reconciliation.

Rupture. "The Break," &c.

Peace and Disarmament. See plays 266-9 and 1927-8 plays in Index. 266-9; 1927-8 Plays 267-9. Also in Appendix 2.

National.

Civil War. See Early Proletcult plays. Big Mass Spectacles. M.A.T. partisan plays: "The Day of The Turbins," &c.

Class War. See early Left Group plays. Little and Big Mass plays. Later Left and Right Group plays showing the weeding out of undesirable reactionary social elements.

Reconciliation. Town Workers and Peasants. Relations between Town and Country. See Club plays, also Melerhold's "Earth Prancing" and "A Window in the Country."

Reconstruction. Building Production and Mechanisation. See Trades Union theatre plays. Also Granovski's policy, 89.

Economics. Socio-economics and others. See Left Group 2nd period.

Agriculture and Industrial reconstruction on collective mechanical lines, and realisation of Lenin's scheme of electrification. See Left Group, 2nd period.

A. MENTAL AND MORAL SCIENCES.**Philosophy.**

The current of bolshevist philosophy underlies plays since 1919 with the exception of the individualistic ones during the N.E.P. transitional period. See "Man Who Was Thursday" for interpretation of collectivist philosophy.

Metaphysics

The liberation motive is suggested or definitely expressed in plays, spectacles, operas, &c., approved of the bolshevist censorship. The themes of Life and Death, Darkness and Dawn, Angels and Demons are dealt with.

Religious and æsthetic. See Tairov 1st period; the Travelling and Habima theatres.

Religion.

Faith in Bolshevism and Science. Expressed in particular by the extreme Left Group, and the later Left Centre Group plays.

Anti-religion found in Little Mass theatre plays and Left Group and Proletcult satires.

Worship of Science. See "The Bug" ("Klop"). Of work. Of Great Men (Lenin, Marx, etc.), shown in use of busts, photos, etc.

National religion. Habima plays.

Ethics (and Morals).

The new Moral Code found in plays upholding the righteousness of Mass action, and denouncing individualism as disease and madness. See Left Group, especially Proletcult plays. Also new concepts of God, relations of sex, man, woman, family, play, work, punishment, good and evil, found in soviet comedies, &c., of the 2nd period. Ethics and science see "Tales of Scarabee."

B. NATURAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES.

Sociology.

Interpretation of Social Life, 175, Left Group 117-8.

Analyses of sociological subjects. Meierhold, 209; Tairov, 223; M.K.A.T., 249. Of bolshevist ideology in a play, 231. Sociological values in Club theatres, 137; in Mass Demonstrations, 139.

Psychology (Psycho-Sociology). See Jewish plays, Tairov's 2nd period, Stanislavski's 2nd period plays.

Biology (Bio-psychology). Systems of physical culture, acrobatics, athleticism. Biomechanics, Taylorism, &c. See Meierhold's, Tairov's, Granovski's, Habima and worker's theatres and studios and clubs. Systems of body and brain culture, see Meierhold's, Tairov's, The Travelling and the two Jewish theatres, and the Circus.

Education, Cultural. See theatres and Opera houses directly under Lunacharski's control. Aesthetics. Also see State (Old Imperial) theatres, and Opera houses.

Women. Position, Employment and Duties. Found in plays like "Cement," dealing with the New Woman.

Children. See Children's theatre.

Relations of Sex. New types of Courtship: Marriage: Family. Divorce. See plays and Satires since 1922.

C. MECHANICAL SCIENCE.

The Machine. See Meierhold, Foregger, Proletcult, and Left Group theatres generally.

FORM.

Technical systems prior to 1917. Aesthetic-Synthesis. All exhibit, more or less, the influence of the vague and meaningless tendency in stage-craft called "The Art of The Theatre." The latter is hopelessly confused with the science of the Theatre. The Art of the Theatre is studio aesthetics run mad, and the only effect it has had in this country (England) was to help the so-called "Advancing Theatre" to advance into the hands of

the smiling commercial gentlemen who commercialised its art ideas and principles during the war and so grew rich beyond redemption.

The Old Sensibility. Æsthetic-Synthesis.

- Japanese, 52, 61.
- Commedia dell' Arte, 52, 64, 225.
- Actualism, 58.
- Meinungen Players, 54, 101, 104.
- Conditionalism, 54.
- Mysticism, 54.
- Mystical Anarchism and Primitivism, 55.
- Greek Collectivism, 55, and Roman and Mediæval Mass, 66.
- Musical Expression, 56.
- Unity of Action, 56.
- Stylisation, 57.
- Anti-decoration, 57.
- Statuesqueness, 58.
- Reinhardtism, 59.
- Marionettism, 60.
- Levels, 60.
- Practicals (Reform of Opera), 62.
- Spectacle, 63.
- Masks and Pantomime, 63, 95.
- Improvisation, 64.
- Construction, Old and New, 65, 67, 70.
- Ensemblism, 102.
- Neo-Realism. See Tairov.

The Kinema and Radio lend themselves to a similar analysis.

JOURNALS, BOOKS AND ARTICLES MENTIONED IN THE TEXT.

Articles.

- Manchester Guardian, 180, 218.
- Daily Telegraph, 217.
- Observer (London), 228.
- The Broadcaster (London), 293.
- The History of the Technique of the Theatre (Russian) Meierhold, 61.

Books.

- "Capital," Marx, 10.
- "Origin," Darwin, 10.
- "The Journal of Dr. Dapertutto" (Russian), Meierhold, 65.
- "Stage Director's Notes" (Russian), Tairov, 81.
- "The Jew in Drama," M. J. Landa.
- "The Birth of Spectacle" (Russian), P. P. Haideburov, 160.
- "On the Theatre" (Russian), (Meierhold), 221.
- Theatre House Journals, 224-5.
- "7 Days," Moscow State Kamerny theatre, 224, 227-8.
- "T.I.M.," Meierhold's theatre, 225.

The New Sensibility. Since 1917. Constructive Synthesis.

A revolt against traditional forms.

The social environment is expressed as a series of structures in which the utility of machinery plays a part. The producers are building a new world.

The New Mass Theatre, 66, 138-49.

Bio-Mechanics, 67, 70, 213.

Taylorism, 70.

Industrial psychology, 70.

Behaviourism, 70.

Reflexology, 70.

Higher State Workshops, 70.

Construction. See Meierhold's, Tairov's, Jewish Left Group theatres, Chapter 9.

The Machine, 69, 119, 130, 133, 150-5, 158, 178.

Stage Kinematography, 65, 70-2, 212, 227-9. Meierhold's later technique.

Concrete Realism. See Tairov's later technique.

Realistic Expressionism. See "Carmen," 169.

NOTE.—See Appendices for lists of plays, &c., in chronological order, for lists of films and names of new authors, and other names not included in the name index.

