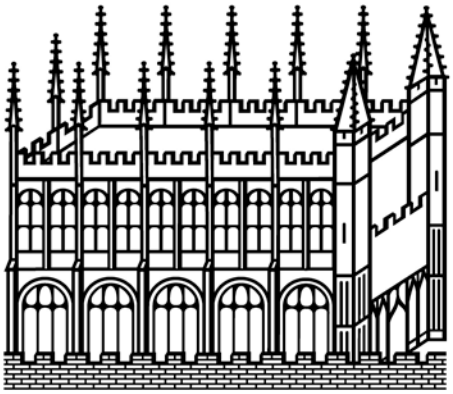

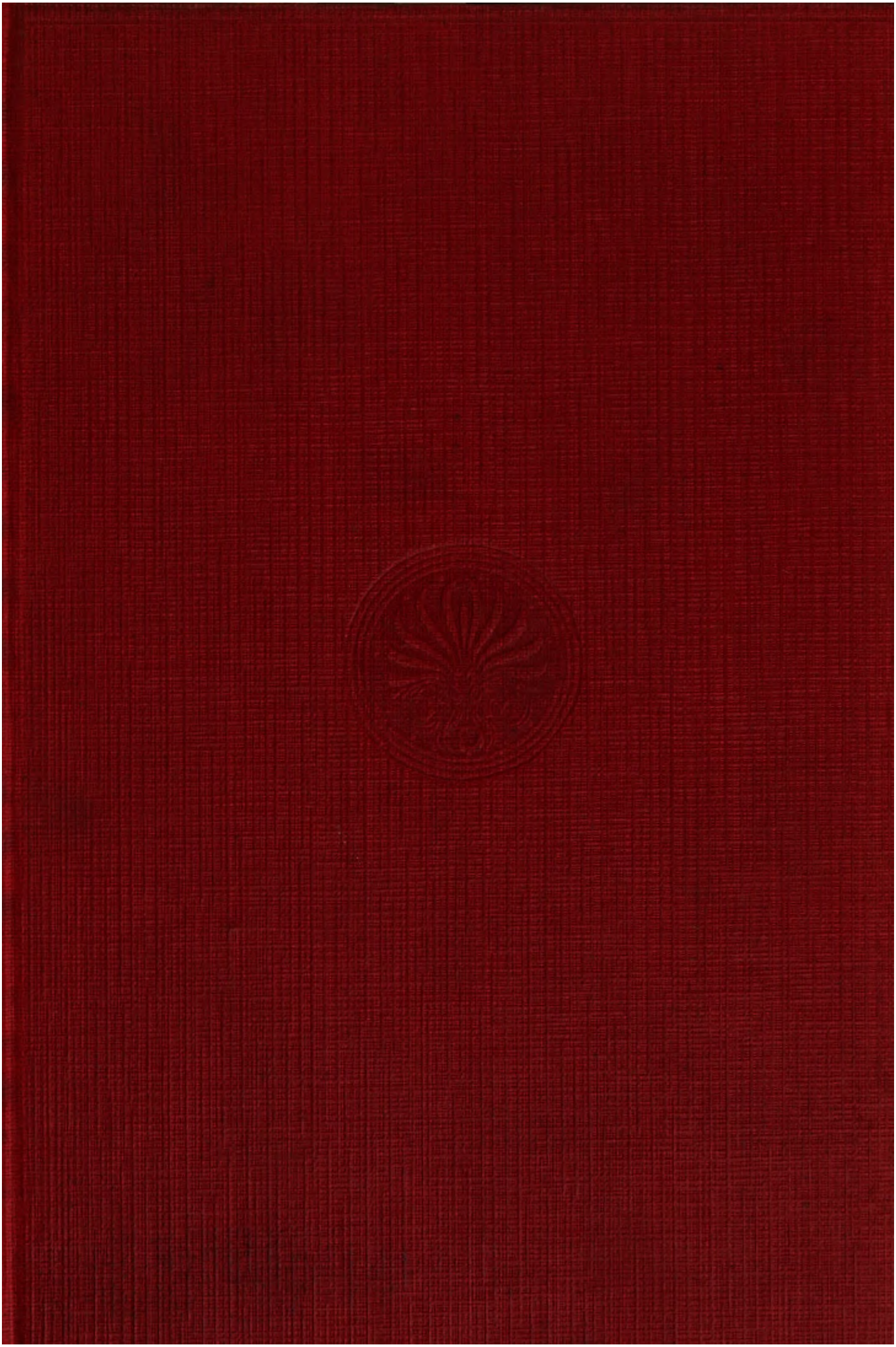

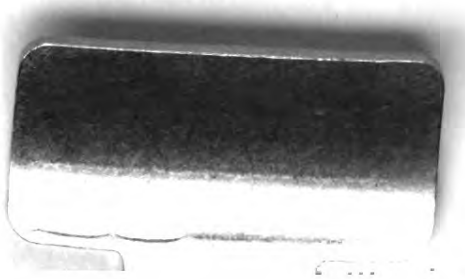

ONE LOOKS AT RUSSIA

BY HENRI BARBUSSE

UNDER FIRE *and* LIGHT
(two novels of the War, in one volume)

UNDER FIRE (Everyman's Library, one volume)

THUS AND THUS (stories of fact)

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RUSSIA

by

HENRI BARBUSSE

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I

SYNTHESIS

It is a Colossus all of one piece—the trunk of Europe bestriding the breadth of Northern Asia. It matches in bulk the ancient Empire of Timurlane in its prime, and the modern British Empire before its decline. It is, to be mathematically accurate, the sixth part of the world.

Behind the bars of these lines of latitude, in a setting of winter palaces and bulbous towers, a whole old bric-à-brac of history disappears for ever—crowns, tiaras, black eagles, ukases, ikons in their golden niches, nobles, great ladies, little fathers, "popes," grand dukes, befurred generals, bewhiskered diplomats, rich champagne-drinking merchants, Russian princes sometime arbiters of fashion and figures of farce out of fashion, adventurers of the North, Boris Goudounov, Ivan the Terrible, Michael Strogoff, grand operas, and melodramas. There is an earthquake; there are volleys and bombs. The axe of the workers has slashed all this away; and now it is very far away, on another plane of history.

To-day what is the setting in the countryside and in the towns? As always, in all things Russian, there is one characteristic—immensity. Everything about this country is on the grand scale—everything; its works and its ways, its doings and its dreams. You

can sum up the country as a whole in two words—distance and spaciousness.

A vast expanse, white as virgin paper, is dotted with the black squares of little farmsteads. There are hedgerows which, for all their immensity, seem tiny as lines drawn upon it in ink. There are countless slender trees with snow upon their outstretched arms. There are roads illimitable as eternity. And along them *troikas*, with the horse in the middle trotting, and the other two galloping, carry the yoke of their pointed collars, like little moving doorways, from end to end of the country.

There are rosy babies, children with cheeks flushed with the cold, bearded men long-booted and fur-capped, young men and women with coloured kerchiefs around their heads and heavy clothing of variegated stuffs—red and yellow and blue, all the tints of a flower-bed. The crowd itself conjures up festival like a garland—all the romance of a children's fairy-tale, all the pomp and vanity of life. Everywhere peasants and soldiers dance set steps, with grave faces, to the frantic accompaniment of the accordion. Even more colourful are the pictures in the exhibitions, and the toys hand-carved and painted by the workers with a lively fancy; for their models are alive—figures felt-hatted, list-shod, that leave great footprints in the snow.

Around the windows of the farmsteads are wood carvings, picked out in every colour imaginable. So it is from the Ukraine to the Arctic Ocean, where the name of Archangel stands for icicles and that of Murmansk for fog, and on the other side of the Urals

as well. In the Ukraine the houses are decked with thatch silvered like a grey squirrel. Elsewhere they are roofed with balks of timber, and in wealthy districts and in the great towns with sheet-iron painted a reddish brown.

We need a transformation scene to convey an adequately swift impression of the changes which season and region bring with them; for there is the Russia of summer and the Russia of winter, and there is the Russia of the north and the Russia of the south. To go from north to south, from November to April, is to pass from white to green. Southern Siberia, and indeed a large part of Siberia, is during the summer months an earthly paradise of flowers and fruits, an Asiatic California. The soil of the Ukraine and of the whole centre of Russia is all of one texture: squares, rectangles, and strips of cultivation are all cut out of the same stuff, a deep continental layer of black earth which winter bleaches white as linen.

Around Nijni Novgorod and for two thousand five hundred kilometres beyond is the alluvial plain of the Volga. The steppe of the Balchirs is silvery with its tall grasses; here is the vast territory where a man transplanted from the towns puts on a *poud* in weight in a month. The Crimea is rugged, but in the fertile valleys of its grass lands there are groves of cypresses which exhale the solemnity of a state funeral. (The cypress is not native, but it has taken firm hold upon the soil, and this coast is more Sicilian than Sicily.) Somewhere in the region of Soukhoum you enter the shadow of palm forests.

There are Caucasians with grey turbans and great

black cloaks stiff as stone, and Georgians with their delicate profiles surmounted by the wide Astrakhan cap, their graceful figures, and their slender legs booted in what seem like thin-soled stockings of supple leather. These lithe bodies, passing to and fro, stand out in all that region over which presides the venerable, white-haired Caucasus. Elsewhere there are tall fur hats, white or black, like enormous nests within which heads nestle. In Turkestan, country of camels and sand and wells, of rounded roofs dazzling in their whiteness, you have a strong whiff of the Orient, peopled with figures in skull caps and flowing mantles.

It is a hurly-burly of nationalities which overlap and intermingle: Usbeks, Mongols, Kalmucks, Kirghiz, Samoyeds, Turks, and all the other races within the Soviet frontiers—there are some sixty main divisions. Spread over two milliards of hectares you have a kaleidoscope of peoples—a kaleidoscope of harmony. Nationalisms have been erased by the rubber of labour. But at every corner of the Continent there are notices in different tongues.

The Government of Moscow fosters the national languages. East and west the old, picturesque, sonorous traditions are rising from their ashes. Learned commissions have even invented alphabets for the spoken tongues which either had none or had a superfluity of symbols. These new alphabets are in Latin letters. Here you see *Atélégraf* or *Aposta*, which are Abkhasian; or there on the shop-window of a grocer in Azerbaijan is *Maqaroni*, which is Turkish. All the suave, insinuating policy of nationalisms and autonomies is summed up in these signs. Some day,

with international good-will, the Russian language itself will be put into the Latin alphabet.

Peasants are much the same all the world over. There are many, in Russia as elsewhere, who are among "the most backward in the world." They are afraid of fire, but they are also afraid of insurance. If a farmstead goes up in flames it is rebuilt again quite close to its neighbour. "But in that way are you not increasing the risks of fire?" "It prevents my neighbour from being reckless about fires, because if he sets me alight he burns himself." At the same time the former serfs, now finally freed, follow with more and more attentive eyes the positive results of collective and State farming — and the advantages which these rational methods of cultivation offer everybody as compared with the poor results of individual effort. The figures are there for them to see. The Russian peasants are not mystics at large, but mystics with their feet on the ground. They are interested in realities; and these figures are devilish eloquent.

Everywhere the approaches to the towns are impressive—as impressive as the countryside. All the cross-roads of Russia smack of infinity. There are vast, green suburbs, with roadways of stone setts or great muddy tracks separating the steep banks of houses. The wooden homesteads face each other across a wide expanse of road. The city squares—bounded by low buildings, or by the walls of a palace or of a church with squat domes of bright green or blue, picked out in points of gold and gilded drops pendulous around the surmounting cross—have the air of open plains.

Here is Moscow. The Kremlin, barbaric and magnificent, with its towers sheathed in green and red, a storied fortress set in the midst of the city; Saint Basil, with its squat domes and vivid slashes of colour; Tverskaia and Petrovskaia, black with people. All these monuments of bygone wealth and fame have been turned to new uses, and with the breaking of the old barriers the tide of humanity has flowed into them. Beside them rise new buildings, reinforced concrete and plate glass from foundation to roof, great blocks of symmetry, dark or light grey. On their façades and across the streets the October Revolution displays its signs before all eyes—the Red Flag, red streamers bearing watchwords, the star and the hammer and the sickle of the Soviet.

There are few motor-cars. In all the U.S.S.R. there are fifty times fewer than in France and a thousand times fewer than in the United States. But there are tramways, and an underground railway is under construction. There are some ancient, ramshackle carriages, with room for about one person and a half, old-fashioned toys presided over by drivers whose manners and pretensions ill accord with their outfit. Squares and street-crossings swarm with itinerant hawkers and their little portable stalls, multi-coloured mosaics of packets of cigarettes, fruit, flowers, sweets, and shoe-laces.

At all the most frequented spots little boot-blacks have their pitches on the pavement. They deserve a mention in any description of the Russia of yesterday and to-day. So, too, do the people who crunch sunflower seeds between their teeth, eating the tiny kernel

and spitting out the shell—all while they work or even while they talk. This is a habit of the Russian countryman. One meets it everywhere — not only in the villages, but even on the stage of the theatre.

Everywhere there are tall, slender cylinders of steel, with wide mouths and narrow necks, receptacles destined to consume paper and other litter. They stand as punctuation points in all the streets, squares, and public places of the Soviet. There are no cafés, and few restaurants. But one can buy carmine *bortch*, caviare served plain or with orange juice, cream, smoked salmon, sturgeon, chicken—and chicken, and chicken!—*kacha* and great gherkins dipped in water. Tea is still served in glasses. Unhandy though it may be they like it better this way—a small concession of logic to tradition.

What do the passers-by look like? Apart from those who come from another part of Europe or of the world, one sees here and there examples of those well-defined types of the Soviet continent whom I have mentioned above. You may note the oval face of the Georgian, clear-cut as a Persian miniature, with his big, black eyes and aquiline nose; the thin, bearded face of the Armenian; the face of the Jew, shrunken or swollen as the case may be; or the square face, with narrowed eyes and flattened cheek-bones, of the Turanian.

If you look beyond these specialized types—and on the whole they are rare—for any general "Russian type," you will not find it. There was formerly a certain marked aristocratic type, of which specimens, attractive but degenerate, are still to be met abroad, where they await a non-existent future. There are

also some relics of antiquity left behind—a pompously old-fashioned bourgeois, clad in the torn and dusty garments of former respectability; or some potentate of the old times, like the man who still parades the streets of the town of Leninakan in the antediluvian uniform of a tsarist general.

But all the rest is, like the Americans, a new race fused in a melting-pot. There is nothing more Russian about the Soviet people to-day than there is English about the American people. One sees types dark and types blonde; the thick, close-cropped, and probably bespectacled head of the German; the angular face of the Anglo-Saxon; and the whole range of the intellectuals, from the chin-tufted French model to the flowing, smoke-stained beards of the romantics.

One should speak circumspectly these days about the Russian type and the Russian race, for the very good reason that they have ceased to exist—or, rather, that a new type and a new race have taken their place. The peculiarities of this new race are social rather than ethnical. It is a race proletarian and proletarianized, with a large peasant admixture (all these boys and girls, thick-set and sturdy, who pass you by are a reminder of that), a race plebeian, healthy, and new-born. It is a race which bears no name historical or geographical: it is the Soviet race.

The heads of its men are unfamiliar with hats, even in the cities. Everywhere one sees the flat cap, or sometimes the little Oriental skull-cap, round, tight, and of all colours, wedded to the top of the cranium. These are the two species of headgear generally worn in any corner of the Soviet continent you please. In

the depths of winter a whole range of fur caps is sported; in summer, very often, nothing is worn on the head at all.

A linen coat clothes the bodies of the race, or rather a military tunic, or, better again, a tunic shirt—sometimes embroidered and sometimes not—of linen, black or white, or, more rarely, of some other colour, with a leather belt around it. The outfit is completed, nine times out of ten in the cities, by a satchel carried under the arm or in the hand. One half of the pairs of legs wear trousers and shoes, and the other half knickerbockers and boots.

All these heads, all these bodies, all these legs, seem interchangeable. Imagine all the possible combinations that I have indicated above between the upper and the lower parts of the men, and you have, as near as makes no matter, the aspect of one-half—the male half—of the Muscovite crowd. The other half goes bare-headed, or with its heads swathed in a white or coloured scarf, or, again, in that close-fitting felt hat which fashion has at the moment made universal. The skirts of its frocks are very short, and a large proportion of it wears its hair short too.

When it snows or rains short felt boots sometimes swell feminine legs into cylinders. But, as a rule, on almost all feet, one sees the rubbers which they call *galoches*. This pair of little boats is the inseparable comrade of the pedestrian throughout the winter. When you enter somebody's house you leave them at the door. The vestibules of hotels and office buildings are full of regiments of *galoches* awaiting their owners two by two.

For all practical purposes it is the same crowd that circulates in the wide main streets of all the cities of the U.S.S.R.—in Nijni Novgorod, intersected by the deep courses of its two rivers; in Leningrad, surging out of the far-off mists of that other city of Saint Petersburg —Leningrad, that majestic procession of painted monuments, of white colonnades on a base of green, ochre, or orange, with the fortress of Peter and Paul and its clock-tower that cleaves the sky, thin and sharp as a sword; in Kharkov, where the colossal house of the Trusts has the dimensions of a city in itself; or in Kiev, or Odessa, or Tiflis, or Baku, or Tashkent.

In town and countryside alike many former dwellings of the rich present some very remarkable examples of bad taste. These buildings are constructed in accordance with the "modern style" of the beginning of the twentieth century. They bear a melancholy witness to the passing of the wave of "embellishment" over the empire of the tsars in that period. One sees staircases and grilles and window frames whose distorted outlines twist in a *danse macabre* of iron and stone, recalling to Parisians the architecture of our underground stations which is so humiliating a blot on our national dignity. These trashy and now crumbling façades strike a distressing note in any evocation of the Russian scene.

Once a week, in town and village, every church still open has its handful of people who, with their eyes closed in ecstasy, may imagine if they will that they are a multitude. These open churches testify much more vividly than those that are closed to the death of a religion. Mass is celebrated on Sundays with low

lights, discreetly and almost confidentially. The lousy "popes," with their tall hats, and their long hair tumbling over their cassocks, and their long beards trailing over their wide collars, are becoming but shadows in the towns, and they find themselves more and more shunned among the peasants who at length have found them out.

Occasionally one sees ex-monks roaming the countryside in districts where formerly there were monasteries —now turned into sanatoriums. They are recognizable by their furtive faces, their long beards—that vaguely spiritual vegetation—their straggling hair, with its longest lock tied with a string, and by the rags in which, since they will not turn their hands to work, they are reduced to wandering the roads.

Apart from the priests and monks, sects, Evangelical and Tolstoyan, seek to instil into youth a religion from which as many absurdities have been eliminated as is possible without eliminating religion itself. But enough of these absurdities remain to make it certain that this religion, only partially shorn of the ridiculous, will some day collapse of its own weight, spurned by a people whose eyes have now been opened.

Many things remain as before within the present frontiers of the Soviet Union. After all, factories are always factories, and fields are always fields. The Russian language, too, remains essentially unchanged —apart from some details of calligraphy. Surveying yesterday and to-day one might well ask, What is changed in all this?

The change is so great that it is not visible to the eye. Between yesterday and to-day a change greater than

there has ever been anywhere else has taken place on the soil of Russia. The very foundations of everything are changed. From the Arctic Ocean to the Caspian and to the Sea of Japan, the old order of things has been overturned. The great mass of the workers, oppressed in all other ages and in all other countries, has come to the top and controls the life of the nation. It has turned the distinctions which exist among men upside down, and at the same time given them real meaning; and it has set its hand to a great plan of logical human ordering.

All enterprises, all services, all organisations, have their Communist nucleus—at once their motive force and their regulator. A countless number of collectivist wheels, interlocking one in the other, control communal life. In every school, in every establishment or institution of any kind, in every club of men, women, or youth, in every babies' crèche, in every administrative unit, in every village, there is a red corner. There you will see the portrait of Lenin against a background of red, with the sickle and the hammer and some of those formulæ which a dozen years ago carried the great proletarian tide to victory.

The inside walls of all public buildings—schools, factories, offices—teem with illustrations: a regular mural newspaper, with courses in politics and economics condensed into "telegraphese," medical advice, and cartoons bearing upon the great questions of the day. There are notices everywhere—at street corners, on stairways, in shop-windows: statistics intended to help the people to realize the conditions in which they live.

These statistics, expressing in condensed form things which speak for themselves, tell of the enormous effort which has been successfully carried through—the setting of national economy on its feet in the midst of ruin and of universal hatred and shameless calumny; the sacrifices made and the results achieved in the spheres of industry, agriculture, education, and public health; the balancing of the immense budget of a hundred milliards. Under the inspiration of the watchwords of co-operation, of collectivism, and, it may now be said, of Communism, the proletariat, itself the source of all orders, has realized more fully than anywhere else a true synthesis of national work.

Russian character, despite all the crash of its past history, is Russian character still. A large field of habit and custom has not changed. The Sovietists cannot do without their games of chess and of chance. They are as fond as ever of the *balalaika*, the accordion, and those endless conversations which waste time and energy. They are no fonder than before of punctuality: the habits of some of their leaders are the exception which prove the rule.

But wider and wider among them all spread the desire and the taste for scientific equipment, the passion for national reconstruction, and the military defence of the Revolution against whatever winds may blow or tides may surge. The young man student and the young girl student, when they go on walking tours together, discuss the figures ordained by the almost infallible Five Years Plan. Electrification in the U.S.S.R. has been elevated to something like the position of a patron saint. There is a warm affection

for the red army and the G.P.U., which defend the common interest of all.

Everything this people does is alive and instinct with life. It plans its economic processes for several years ahead. In everything it feels its way towards reality, and grasps it. Its painting seeks for truth between the formulæ of exactitude in detail and the conventional canons which define the essentials of pictorial art. Its cinema is a profuse reflector of life. Its new literature springs up like a crop out of the soil. It is realism in action. Its collective body performs immeasurable feats and does them with a will; and the innumerable workshops of factories and public services delight over every new stone with which they cover its territory. It is a *renaissance* comparable with that of the Middle Ages; and that fact alone testifies to the difference between this people of to-day and the mystics of yesterday.

Borne forward on the wave of youth, with the fresh armies of the childhood of the red flag coming up in support, this people which is in process of becoming a new race unified by labour is not only the purest and the cleanest in the world: it is also the happiest. For every one of its members begins to feel an active consciousness of his part in the realization of the work of the whole, and of the dignity with which his share in it invests him.

There is equality in work. At the first glance there is nothing to distinguish the mistress of the house from her servant, the Minister from his secretary, the General from his soldier—nothing in their bearing, or in their manner of addressing each other. That is something

which has never been witnessed before. This stimulating rule of equality elevates every man's understanding to the point where it acts as a reinforcement of discipline. Work becomes more effective when its true purpose is understood.

Of course there are faults and failures, and any number still of points of weakness. There must yet be struggles and battles and sufferings. But the fatherland of labour made rational cannot be anything else now that it has begun so to be; and it can do no other than shine before the eyes of men and draw them with its lure.

II

CONGRESS IMPRESSIONS

My strongest impression of that Sixth International Congress, which has excited so much discussion, was gained at the opening session. It struck me as fine in the widest creative sense of the word. I have rarely had the good fortune to attend an opening so thrilling and so impressive.

The session was held, as everybody knows, in the great hall of the trade union headquarters in Moscow, formerly the social hall of an aristocratic club. Nowadays this scene of amusement serves for solemn meetings of the Revolution, and the theatre has become a temple. A note of stark simplicity was struck in its scheme of decoration as the setting for this evening. All round the hall were white columns, clear-cut, slender, shining. Between them, from top to bottom, hung red curtains, quivering in the air. Columns and hangings made up a massive series of great vertical lines of white and red.

Above was the white ceiling, ornamented, but not over-charged, with reliefs. Between the heads of the columns, all along the four sides of the hall, hung a series of chandeliers in serried constellations. Over them, in great horizontal lines, white upon a red ground, were inscribed the watchwords and the rallying cries of the Revolution and its appeals to the masses of the world. They were strongly reminiscent

of those gigantic inscriptions on a coloured background which, dwarfing the people below, run around the immense cupola of that hollow mountain, Saint Sophia in Constantinople.

This was not all. Machinery also played its part in the setting. There were limelight projectors, with their great metallic heads, their enormous masks like the streaked retina of an eye, sometimes obscured and sometimes flashing, and their skeleton legs. Several were installed upon the floor, or in front, of the stage, now the platform of the *presidium* and the speakers. Before the seats of the orators were set little black microphone boxes.

All these machines were connected with their bases by wires and cables, some strung in the air, others coiled on the ground like ropes on the deck of a ship. One could observe also all the mechanism of the earphones provided for listeners to fasten to their heads in the stalls. So one had the impression of the outline of a factory in the former theatre, or rather it seemed that a scientific drama was about to be staged in this temple, under the sign of the hammer and sickle displayed on the red banners.

The session opened. In the seats of the hall, in silent, symmetrical rows, neatly ordered like sardines in a box, were ranged those who had come to listen and debate for a whole month. In front of them rose the stage, and in the centre of this great platform stood the rostrum. On either side of it were tables. Behind and above it were two superimposed strata—first a bank of hydrangeas, arranged in a compact, geometrical mass, running right across the stage; and,

above it, a long table with a red cloth which also covered the whole diameter of the platform. Behind this long, imposing table were a row of seats, empty save that in the centre, from which arose a man who began to speak in a sudden hush of silence.

There was not very much light; the great chandeliers which hung all around the square setting of the hall shed little outside their immediate radius. This man whose outline one could see and whose voice one could hear, who was quite dwarfed by the impressive spaciousness of his surroundings, appeared at the apex of the assembly, as though he were its head and its face. It was Boukharin, President of the Communist International.

The mention of his name brings to mind a whole hierarchy organized in innumerable international ramifications—first, the principal sections in which every group of assistants represent the head in their turn; and then a whole system of men who are cogs in the interlocking wheels of a chain which extends down to the depths of the masses of the world. This is no literary symbolism. In this setting of white and red one gained a vivid, direct impression of the lines which social architecture should logically follow and of the Red heart of the world.

At one point the speaker rendered homage to the dead, the victims of the World Revolution on the march, and the whole assembly rose to its feet. He stopped speaking. One heard music, a hymn magnificent, calm, holy. Then the music ceased and Boukharin resumed his speech. The thing was done with an immense—one might almost say a dreadful

—simplicity. One felt that all this solemnity in which one was caught up was based upon a force of Nature, that force which vibrates in flesh and bone, and one sensed its roots far beyond that hall. I understood clearly at that moment the significance of Lounatcharski's phrase: "Soviet ritual strives to be the mirror of society's ideals."

The delegates listened to the speech of Boukharin, and as he spoke every one heard him in his own tongue—some directly in Russian; others, who wore the earphones on their heads, in their respective languages: English, French, or German. Every one had set at the appropriate place the regulator in front of him which controlled his apparatus, and heard accordingly the voice of one of the translators who, hidden around the rostrum, translated the orator's address into microphones as he spoke. This was the first time that this procedure had been employed with success in an international congress.

After the hurly-burly of the election of the *presidium* some thirty persons mounted the stage and took the upper row of seats, where their heads were barely visible—the lighting, as I have said, was dim. Delegates succeeded one another at the rostrum. They were figures of tragedy, representatives of those proletariats who have suffered most bloodily from the revolutionary battle and from persecution—the Italian, the Balkan, and finally the Chinese.

The Chinese delegate quivered on the rostrum. His speech seemed to be nothing but a succession of cries. Towards the end of his harangue, when he burst into a spate of appeals, anathemas, and revolu-

tionary oaths, the other Chinese delegates in the hall —about a dozen, workers, students, young men—rose to their feet and raised their right hands, and with frenzy in their fine faces shouted their war-cry in chorus. It was a touching, almost overwhelming spectacle; for in this united cry one seemed to hear the lament and the anger of that innumerable proletariat which at that moment was being decimated at the other end of Asia.

The main ceremony—that ceremony whose reality gripped one at the heart—resumed its course with the speech of a soldier: a simple little soldier standing in the middle of the rostrum, with two other little soldiers like himself standing one on either side of him by way of General Staff. He said that he was not a Russian soldier, but a soldier of the proletariat of the world. Then some Soviet workers, representing different bodies of artisans and different districts, succeeded one another in groups of three or four—the speaker in the middle, and the others around him embodying the thoughts he spoke. Sometimes they presented, as in a *tableau*, pieces of machinery, the products of their labour. They explained what they were doing. They spoke of the spirit and the joy of their work, which, instead of being exacted by force from the worker, and serving only to oppress him further, is here done not only by the worker, but for the worker.

Then there came a representative of the non-Russian peoples of the Union, an Usbek, thin and yellow, with his little flat cap and his long blue cloak. His republic is in Eastern Asia, below Siberia, on the borders of China and India. In his guttural language

he testified frenziedly to his faith in the Soviet and his love for its Government, which had strengthened and supported his people, and nobly given them a place in Socialist civilization.

In the dimly lit Congress hall illumination suddenly burst forth; streams of light shot from the projectors like strokes of a shining axe. They cut the whole hall into sections, segments of light and shade. All at once there was nothing to be seen but the long red table above the hydrangeas, or a row of heads, or a slice of decoration, or a group of delegates. Or perhaps a shell of light suddenly bombarded a speaker, and shed its rays upon some one and set him shining like a star in the crowded hall—the Russian blouse and the young blonde head of Boukharin, or Clara Zetkin, haloed in her white hair, or the deeply lined face of Katayama, or the lean face of an Indian, or the massively modelled face of Thallemann. The chandeliers and the electric bulbs faded to yellow by contrast with the sharp radiance of the projectors, cold as moonlight.

This first act of the Congress was an explanatory act, forcibly demonstrating the dimensions and the many-sidedness of this movement whose rumblings shake the world. The next phase in its development—after the procession of men bearing witness to the present and the future—was a speech by Marcel Cachin, in which in the name of the *presidium* he saluted the delegates, and summed up this preliminary action in a few decisive phrases, which he hammered to the rostrum like a blacksmith. They stirred an exaltation of certitude in the hearts of all of us sworn adherents of the cause.

Here and there in this great spectacle, as in all great enterprises and in life itself, was struck the note of comedy. It was supplied by the classic gestures of the photographers in the midst of the Congress. To take photographs at such a Congress is a sporting business. The photographers manœuvred around the rostrum at the edge of the platform. They twisted and turned, brandishing their cameras in ardent search for the moment to profit by the patchwork radiance shed by the continually shifting beams of the projectors. They hung their magic boxes round their necks by a strap, resting them on their stomachs, and bent themselves backwards and forwards, striving to catch the propitious second as it fled. "They are comical, there is no other word for it," said young Liebknecht, who was sitting beside me.

They played the worthy and useful role of supernumeraries in this great drama of the Congress, lending a welcome touch of light relief to this assembly which was more solemn than others, because it came after others, and with a loftier mission than theirs—to carry revolutionary order, under the shadow of imperialist war, one step farther forward against bourgeois disorder.

III

THE DRAMA OF LAND AND CORN

If the agrarian question presents itself almost everywhere to-day with terrible insistence, and has become one of the greatest problems of the present time (that is to say of the future, for the future is only the present in action), for the Soviet Union, the State of Workers and Peasants, it assumes an importance which is exceptional, and may well be called vital.

The fundamental principle of the Russian Revolution was the systematic overturning of the old social order, and the reorganization of the foundations of society to the sole profit of the labouring masses. The Revolution of October 1917 brought into being, in a territory of two milliards of hectares, peopled by one hundred and forty-nine millions of inhabitants—the tenth part of humanity—a proletarian republic which aimed finally at establishing a completely organized community of workers in the towns and in the fields.

The participation of the masses in power, through an administration as direct as it was mathematically possible to make it, and the fusion of political sovereignty with economic control, demanded these conditions: the monopoly of raw materials and of the means of production, and the centralization of production and of all economic processes. The mechanism

therefore assumed as its basis the suppression of private property.

Up to the present this programme has been only partially realized. Provisionally a certain field had to be left to individual initiative and enterprise when the Revolution, after the war of 1914 and the civil war, had definitely established its authority on the ruins of the Empire of the Tsars, and taken in hand its positive work: economic reconstruction. At that period—in 1921—the situation was "catastrophic"; the machinery of economics destroyed or dislocated, transport almost at a standstill, and industry reduced to the production—and that only with difficulty—of but one-fifth of its pre-war output.

The work of reconstruction, undertaken in these circumstances among rubbish heaps, deserts, and battlefields, has been developed to a point where the figures of the pre-war level of production were first regained, and, in the year 1927, exceeded, in the case of industry by 12 per cent, and in the case of agriculture by 8 per cent. This economic rebuilding has been achieved in the main in accordance with the Socialist principles of the October Revolution. In the statistics of Soviet industrial production Socialist industry accounts for 77·1 per cent (State industry), and 8·8 per cent (co-operative). The percentage represented by private enterprise is therefore 14·1 per cent. For commerce the Socialist percentage is 81·9, and the capitalist 18·1; but for agriculture the Socialist percentage is 2·7, and that of individual enterprise 97·3.

It is obvious, therefore, that Socialist nationalization

has not been carried out to the same extent along the three great economic parallels of industry, commerce, and agriculture; and that, so far as agricultural economy is concerned, the percentage of collectivist enterprise is extremely small in proportion to the whole. Land was allotted to the peasants in little parcels of ownership, and these individual small holdings have considerably multiplied—from sixteen millions before the war to twenty-five millions to-day.

To bring the peasantry into line with Socialist economy the efforts of the Soviets have been put forth through two different channels. One is collective exploitation, which is entrusted to the hands of what are called "rural collectives." This system represents a half-way house between private exploitation and State exploitation. Property remains private, but the co-ordinated efforts of a large number of land-holders are controlled by the "collectives." These are the productive co-operative societies, and, to borrow Stalin's expression, "societies with a rapidly growing production," which interlock with the co-operative societies of consumers, and are in contact with the State institutions. Side by side with this co-operative exploitation there has also been established, but to a very restricted extent, direct agricultural exploitation by the State.

In 1913 there were three classes of land-holders in the Russian Empire: (1) the great landed proprietors; (2) the *koulaks* or rich peasants; and (3) the *biednaks* and *seredniaks*, or poor and moderately well-off peasants. Let us take as an example one product of the first importance—wheat. Out of the five milliards of

pouds[1] which represented the whole Russian crop, the first category provided 600 million *pouds*, the second 1 milliard 900 millions, and the third 2 milliards 500 millions. To-day the great landed proprietors have disappeared, and we find the following three categories: (1) co-operative and State production, 80 million *pouds* of wheat; (2) the *koulaks*, 617 millions; (3) the poor and moderately well-off peasants, 4 milliards 52 millions. The actual total of production of wheat—4 milliards 749 millions—is very nearly the same figure as before the war.

This distribution of the different categories of work on the land is a source of grave concern to the Government. It constitutes an anomaly on a large scale in the economic structure, which in other directions has been almost completely socialized; and it presents all sorts of inconveniences from the point of view both of actual production and of the future development of agriculture in the U.S.S.R.

Private cultivation, split up into tiny parcels, yields only a stunted productivity in consequence of the inability of the small holders to employ perfected means of farming or mechanize their labour. The result is that every one of these bits of holdings in practice confines itself to a production just sufficient for its own needs. The upward curve of production, which is so marked in other branches of Soviet economy, is for this reason almost non-existent in the sphere of agriculture.

In 1928 the U.S.S.R. experienced a somewhat severe wheat crisis. The stock intended for national

[1] The *poud* equals sixteen to seventeen kilogrammes.

consumption proved insufficient. The price and the quality of bread were both profoundly affected. This insufficiency must be attributed to the very rapid growth of industrial activity in the towns, whose needs and demands had in the past few years grown out of all proportion to the development of agricultural production. It should also be taken into account that other crops had been increased to the detriment of wheat.

Finally it should be noted that rural consumption is very much higher than it was: the peasant eats more, and better, than in the time of the Empire. That the crisis did not arise from any decline in production is very clearly proved by the fact that on 1 April of this year 1928 the wheat stocked in the U.S.S.R. for home consumption amounted to 549 millions of *pouds*, which was 100 millions more than in 1927, and 200 millions more than in 1926, in neither of which years was there any crisis.

Another very grave aspect of the situation is the shortage of wheat intended for export. It is of the first importance to the U.S.S.R. that it should figure in the foreign cereal market. Great difficulties have developed in the course of the economic reconstruction of the Workers' State as a result of the deficiency of corn. One consequence has been friction between the working class and the peasant class—a friction not yet smoothed away despite the fact that, since 1921, the regime of requisitions has been succeeded by that of contributions in kind.

The state of affairs has also prevented the U.S.S.R. from participating as it would wish in transactions

abroad. Formerly the great landed properties furnished 281,600,000 *pouds* of wheat for the export trade. The *koulaks* contributed 650,600,000 *pouds* to this trade, and the poorer peasants 369 millions. That made in all 1 milliard 300 million *pouds*. To-day the great mass of poor and middle peasants put on the market only 466 million *pouds*. The *koulaks*, whose production has been reduced to one-third, are represented only to the extent of 126 million *pouds*, and the State and the co-operative societies to the extent of 38 millions. The total figure of exportation is therefore but half what it was before the war.

The Commissariat of Agriculture and the Government of the Union consider it essential to establish a reserve of at least 100 million *pouds*, to be obtained entirely from State or co-operative production. This reserve is the minimum necessary for the re-establishment of commerce on a firm foundation and for the parrying of speculative *coups*. It is evident that the practical solution of the problem lies in securing the transfer of the small private properties from the third category to the first — that of co-operative and State exploitation.

"Above all the way out is to be found in diverting rural economy, which is small-scale, backward, and divided, into the main stream of collective economy, unifying it, providing it with machinery, equipping it with the conquests of science, and making it capable of throwing the maximum of wheat on the market." (Stalin.) Large-scale agriculture must be developed out of small farming. This transformation, as is obvious from what I have said, has two aspects: the

extension of the "rural collectives," and the increase of State cultivation.

For a considerable time the majority of the peasants showed themselves stubbornly sceptical about the system of collective farming and distrustful of it. They believed that it was merely a political manœuvre. There is a legend which would make of the Russian peasant a mystic. As a matter of fact he is a fervent and dogged seeker after truth, with an extremely logical make-up. His essential realism renders him open to conviction by hard facts and practical demonstrations; and he has been compelled to admit that cultivation in common offers advantages to every one who takes part in it which cannot be reaped by individual cultivation of an equivalent area.

Confronted with facts, he has yielded to the weight of evidence. He has recovered—or, rather, he has revised—that communal instinct which formerly made him look towards the *mir*. But, above all, self-interest has forced him to recognize that the man who invokes the aid of others by a division of labour can accomplish more, and also make a better job of it, than the man who works alone.

In all cases where the area to be cultivated is sufficiently large, the possibility of utilizing machinery and applying modern methods increases considerably the productivity of the soil. In the "communes" of the Ukraine collective labour has secured a yield of 90 to 117 *pouds* of wheat to the desyatin, as compared with 25 to 90 in the case of individual holdings; and it has done so before everybody's eyes and to everybody's knowledge. Similarly,

thanks to the resources which cultivation in common provides, a desyatin is sown in half the time which it took when the individual proprietor cultivated his bit of land on his own account alone.

Lenin was right when he said that what impels the peasant towards Socialism is not faith or love of justice, but purely and simply profit. He understands the practical superiority of cultivation in common. In many a countryman's head this realization has taken the place of that childish delight in the sole and undisputed possession of his own plot of ground which, under the tyranny of the Tsars, seemed to the poor *moujik* the height of his ambition.

As a result these last few years have witnessed a great movement towards cultivation in common. It may be said that the system has now struck root in Russia, and that its progress will henceforth be rapid. The Fifteenth Congress of the Communist Party resolved that the time was ripe for a general mobilization of the masses in accordance with this plan of agricultural development. Recently important decisions were taken at a Pan-Soviet Congress of "collectives." These included the creation of an indivisible fund, and the limitation of the property rights of every member of the *Kholkoz*, with the object of setting these enterprises on a basis of stability and permanence.

Finally, the Government is this year devoting twice as much money as last year—some 60 million roubles, or 780 million francs—to their support. It is intended to reform the existing organizations and establish new ones to such an extent that the present production of the "collectives," which stands at 55 million *pouds*,

will shortly be doubled, and the proportion of their output of wheat—now 30 per cent—earmarked for export be substantially increased.

As for the other category of cultivation destined to bring national agriculture within the Socialist sphere —direct State cultivation—the Government has decided to increase its scope enormously, and a drastic scheme has been evolved. This great movement was launched a short time ago in a series of speeches by Stalin, Rykov, and Kalinin before the Pan-Soviet Congress of "collectives." Its object, as I have said, is to create a reserve of wheat which must not be less than a 100 million *pouds* a year. Once in possession of this stock, which will enable it to baffle speculative manœuvres and prevent fraud, the Government of the Workers' and Peasants' State can enter the foreign market and reconstitute the export trade in wheat, which at present stands at only half its pre-war figure.

An official statement of the Commissariat of Agriculture of the U.S.S.R. explains that the contemplated new scheme of rural economy, which is already in course of establishment, will affect land belonging to the State, and not yet brought under cultivation. It will involve, therefore, no interference whatever with the interests of the peasants—or, rather, with what only some of them regard as their interests; for many of them to-day are actually demanding the creation of communal enterprises. The new units of agricultural economy will cover an area of four million hectares, and none of them will be less than 30,000 hectares in extent.

The following figures will give some idea of the

scope of this farming enterprise which the Soviet Government is undertaking. It requires a capital of 335 million roubles—4 milliards 355 million francs. This sum, equivalent to that which was invested in the construction of the great electricity undertaking at Dnieperostroi, is to be considered as a minimum. Commissary for Agriculture Koubiak estimates that the cost will reach 500 million roubles for a period of four years. He insists that it is "absolutely necessary if we wish to alter existing conditions and to make Socialism practicable on the economic front." He adds that "the country can afford this sum." We have already noted that in the past year the Government has spent large sums on State cultivation.

The organization of this immense enterprise calls for 10,000 tractors, 20,000 ploughs and horses, 10,000 sowing machines, 10,000 binding machines, 18,000 horse-drawn sowers and binders, and 40,000 wagons for transport. It demands the mobilization of more than a thousand technicians. One may appreciate the difficulties which confront the U.S.S.R. in the realization of a plan on this scale, which will bring under a single control territories ranging from 30,000 to 50,000 hectares, and embracing villages and whole districts. There is no precedent for an agricultural organization of such scope, with the exception of certain American enterprises for clearing land and bringing it under cultivation.

American methods will, as a matter of fact, be laid under tribute by the Commissariat of Agriculture, which plans to act quickly, but also carefully, especially in the choice of agricultural machines, which might

bring disappointments in their train if they are not nicely adapted to the conditions of the soil. It is also intended to dispense with the construction of barns for storing the grain, and to adopt the American system of direct transport of the crop from field to railway.

All the details of the work which has been decided upon, and is now being taken in hand, are not yet settled. They have been left unsettled deliberately, in order to leave scope for modifications and new methods which will probably be found advisable in practice. The plan will assume its final shape in action, in accordance with the formula, at once revolutionary and practical, of the Soviet's creative realists.

IV

THE OLDEST MAN ALIVE

He is one hundred and forty years old—perhaps more. I saw him only last week. It was at Lati, a little village in the small republic of Abkhasia, in the middle of the Caucasus, sixty versts from the shores of the Black Sea.

I had heard a good deal at Soukhoum about this prodigiously old man. It was Tchamba, the President of the Central Executive Committee of the Republic, who first mentioned his existence to me. A hundred and forty years — extraordinary world record! If centenarians are rare, rare among them are those who exceed a hundred and five and attain a hundred and ten—and this latter age has hardly been confirmed except in some regions of Bulgaria and the Caucasus. Except perhaps in the case of a certain English peasant named Thomas Parr, who lived, I believe, in the sixteenth century, there seems to have been no transgression of that law which, according to the Bible, was laid down by the God of Israel, when, tired of endless arguments with men, He renounced the creation of beings of the type of Noah and Methusaleh, and gave His human creatures, as the extreme limit of their existence, "six score years."

Certain Caucasian peoples, as I have said, abound in

centenarians. In Abkhasia one often sees men or women of ninety, a hundred, a hundred and five, or more, and it is not out of the way to encounter some hoary-headed, bent old being who will point somebody out to you and say: "That 's my father." That is why the Abkhasians are not as astonished as we are by that exaggerated age—a hundred and forty. But they still regard Nicholas Andreievitch Chapkovski as the ancestor of ancestors, and place him alone, without rival, at the top of the ladder of age.

I was eager to see him, and I asked the Government of Abkhasia to provide me with the means of doing so, for it is no small matter to reach the place where he lives. Comrade Gueguelia, a grand old man with a noble white beard (he had beside him a boy nine years old, his son), told me: "I could get him to come to Soukhoum, but there is the risk that he might arrive dead. The road is long and rather dangerous." I assured him that I wished to make the journey myself, and Gueguelia then summoned to the room of the President of the Republic, which he was occupying *ad interim* as Vice-President of the Central Committee, a regular council of war to arrange for this journey.

Officials and technical advisers were called into consultation. They made wry faces, for it appeared that the first part of the road, thirty kilometres over the mountains from Soukhoum to Tsebelda, was in bad shape after the rains of the past few days, and the second part, from Tsebelda to Lati, in even worse condition. Some advised getting a forecast from the meteorologists of Soukhoum before carrying the project further, for if a storm came on during the

journey it would make a sad mess of things. Others suggested waiting for a spell of settled weather.

It was the general opinion that the stage to Tsebelda could not be made in a large motor, which would not have room to negotiate the turns on the mountain road; but some favoured a two-horsed carriage, others a little Ford. We finally agreed on the latter solution, and the departure was fixed for the next day. The stage, another thirty kilometres, from Tsebelda to Lati, could not be made otherwise than on horseback. Arrangements were made to provide horses for my companions and myself, and an escort of mounted militia was mobilised.

En route! The next day we arrived safely at Tsebelda, where we left the car, and hoisted ourselves into the Caucasian saddles of our mountain horses. They were gentle-eyed beasts, which shook their long manes and wagged their tufted tails at us. Two superb horsemen led the party, Khadjirat Dakhirovitch Djikirba and Pilia, chief and second-in-command respectively of the Abkhasian militia, big, sturdy soldiers in large cloaks of undyed stuff, deep green mountaineers' caps like helmets on which the Soviet star was embroidered, and Caucasian kid boots, soft as gloves. Behind us rode Belkania, a Mingrelian militiaman, black-eyed, black-eyebrowed, black-haired, and black-coated, wearing a red-bordered white cap, and carrying musket and whip.

We were soon in the gorges, with our horses' hoofs ringing on paths cut in the face of the rock. It was sometimes unpleasant enough, this procession in Indian file along these paths suspended over the abyss, narrow

paths of slippery rock, where a shoe would slip and horses only kept their balance because they had four feet. At one point, called Bogadskaia Skala, we came to a precipice so sheer and smooth that it looked as if it had been artificially cut to a depth of several hundred metres. Half-way up, all along it, for a distance of a kilometre and a half, a tiny track about two metres wide ran like a thread. When one was on it one hardly realized on the edge of what a dizzy height he was riding, and one could not see the torrent of the Kador which rumbled far below. But when you looked back after rounding the corner, you felt a sort of retrospective giddiness at the thought that you had crossed that narrow ledge, where horsemen looked like little dots with tiny insects' feet crawling along that gigantic wall; and you shuddered a little at the idea that you would have to come back this way!

Then the road bordering the abyss became more wooded, and finally we descended in corkscrew curves towards a village, with nothing more alarming about the path than its frightful muddiness and stoniness. We reached Lati at nightfall. Here we were going to spend the night. It was too late to go and see the patriarch, who lived in the neighbourhood, and we left our visit to him until the next morning. A wooden barrier was raised, and we found ourselves first in the courtyard, and then up against the long peristyle of a house which we could only see gropingly, if I may mix my metaphors.

The people of Lati are patriarchal and hospitable, as they were in the old days. Our hosts were sitting round the fire which burned on the beaten earth floor of the

common room. There was no chimney, and the smoke curled up to blacken the roof. For all furniture there were a cupboard and a few benches, and this truly common room gave shelter not only to the family, but also to chickens, cats, and a goat tethered to the wall. This wall was made of plaiting, like basket-work, on a wooden frame, and this part of the house, seen from the outside, looked like a great square hamper. Here was the true hearth, the central fire, the *sakla*; and numbers of Abkhasian peasants who have grown rich will not hear of any other method of heating. They feel, so one of them told us warmly, a need to have their eyes smoked by the *sakla* until the day of their death.

We were not received here, but in a little room with walls of rough-cast stone, which contained a stove, and was decorated, unexpectedly enough, with an old shop sign in Georgian characters. One end of the room was full almost to the ceiling with mattresses and coverings intended for the use of guests.

In this house, belonging to peasants in comfortable circumstances—the class of *seredniaks*—reigned the manners and customs of yesteryear. We asked for the exact name of the old man; but we should not have asked a woman, for it is not customary that a woman should mention the name of any man except her husband in the presence of strangers. So the lady we asked, despite her ninety years, did not answer. We got no reply, either, when we asked a young woman how many children she had; that is not a decent question for a man to address to a woman. However, feeling our way carefully, we finally did get to know a

good deal about the super-centenarian, notably from the lips of our nonagenarian hostess.

She was the niece of the old man, having married the son of his brother. She was slight, like a sketch drawn by a delicate artist, with wrinkled, sharp features; her eyes shone in her oval face, and her gestures were very much alive. When we saw her first she was in peasant dress, but she came back to talk to us in her costume of state: a dark veil over her hair, a shaggy cloak (not quite as old as herself), and dancing shoes. Her name was Aroumsouda Chapkovski. She told us that Nicholas Chapkovski was of Polish origin, his father Andrev having emigrated from Poland to the Caucasus. She assured us that her Uncle Nicholas, who was venerated as a very old man when she was quite a child, was to-day not merely a hundred and forty but, to be exact, a hundred and forty-six.

They served us a meal. We ate chicken—each taking a piece on the end of his fork—and also a kind of paste of raw maize out of a bowl in front of each of us, which one rolled into balls between his fingers and dipped in nut oil before eating, and then a preserve of fruit and honey. All the women of the house, in ceremonial garb, from the oldest down to the children, Zounia and Aeda, lined up behind us to attend this solemn rite of nutrition, and poured fresh water for us assiduously.

The next morning, as they say on the cinema, after a great floundering of our horses over paths turned into quagmires, we arrived finally at a vast grassy clearing in the middle of which stood a little square house of

wood. Although a fine rain was falling there were a number of people in the meadow, notably a white-bearded man, wearing a small felt hat surmounted by a *bachlik* (the Caucasian turban of brown worsted), not tightly rolled, but hanging like a hood (the small hat and the *bachlik* are traditional among the peasants of Abkhasia and Georgia). He walked easily enough, leaning on a stick. It was he.

No doubt there is not in our eyes, as there was in those of the Ancients, a glory in extreme old age, nor do we invest with a sort of sanctity a human organism which has preserved its balance and its strength. But it was, nevertheless, moving to find oneself in the presence of him who is beyond all question the oldest man in the world, and who, moreover, out of the hundreds of thousands of people who have walked the earth since the beginning of our era, constitutes a case exceptional and almost fabulous.

If Aroumsouda spoke truly Nicholas Chapovski was born in 1782, in the reign of Catherine the Great, and seven years before the French Revolution. If he had lived in France he would have seen Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, Danton and Robespierre. This man was the senior of Lamartine, of Balzac, of Lord Byron. He was twenty years old when Victor Hugo was born, and forty-six when Tolstoy was born. This miraculous survivor was fourteen years older than Nicholas I would have been if he, too, had survived. He was nineteen when Alexander I ascended the throne of the Tsars, and twenty-two when Napoleon I had himself proclaimed Emperor. And if one wanted to go on with this pathetic little game of evocations, one

could point out, if necessary, that his father might have known Peter the Great.

He greeted us, bowing with his hand on his heart. He introduced to us his wife and children. He invited us on to the little veranda of his frame-built house. We settled ourselves there. He had all sorts of relations around him, and there were six of us new-comers. He shouted for seats in a strong, firm voice: "Bring some chairs for my guests!" Then we began to talk.

The scene was not lacking in a certain element of the picturesque. I was seated beside the man whom death had strangely forgotten. Opposite us, sitting squarely in his chair, his muscular body bursting even out of his capacious coat, Djikirba, that Bourbon-nosed and blue-eyed chief of militia, put my questions to him in the Abkhasian language. Nicholas Andreievitch replied; Djikirba translated his replies into Russian; Comrade Samuel Ignat, who had been good enough to accompany me for the purpose, translated from Russian into English; and my secretary, Annette Vidal, took notes. Each of the persons assembled there besprinkled this complex conversation—carried on very directly and clearly in spite of its various evolutions—with remarks and comments.

In the intervals between putting each of my questions in English and getting the reply back in the same language, I had plenty of leisure to study Nicholas Chapkovski closely. He had unquestionably the air of a very old man, but he showed none of those marks of decay which commonly make the sight of very old men painful. He had not the monstrously shrivelled face, the bloodshot eyes, the drivelling mouth, and the

mummified skin of most of those who have passed the allotted span. He was not very much lined, his eyes were very clear, and his gestures very decided. He had no trace of infirmity. He wore no spectacles, and he even had one surviving tooth. His only complaint was that in the last few years he had grown a little hard of hearing; but one would hardly have suspected it.

His constitution—as we had no difficulty in believing—was something out of the ordinary. He told us that forty, or even twenty, years ago he had been "strong as a mountain," able to carry on his back loads which would have broken that of a man of twenty-five. Some little time earlier—at the age of a hundred and twenty—he had been in the habit of bathing in the river in winter, which none of the young men of Lati dared to do. He drank wine and ate plentifully. To-day he believed that this had much to do with his case. He was still not afraid of wine, or even of vodka.

Did he realize that he was a "sensational" beater of all world records? Oh yes; he had never heard of anybody older than he actually was, and up to now he had seen everybody around him, one by one, lie down and fall asleep. He was so used to accumulating years that it seemed to him that he was already past his second century. But he did not make too much account of his growing superiority among mankind. I cited the one case of his old competitor, Thomas Parr, being careful, lest I should infringe upon his rights, to add that it was an almost legendary case. He had not heard of it, and was much interested.

"I do not know why I am so old," he said; "time

passes, but I do not pass." Then he fell silent and smiled gently; his silence seemed to say: "Well, there it is, for better or for worse." His smile was very innocent, and at that moment one glimpsed in him the fatalistic soul of the Russia that was gone. But the next moment he was laughing and gesticulating, shaking two clenched explanatory fists, or stretching out his arm and pointing oratorically to something in space.

We came back to the essential question: to what, to what regime did he attribute his great age? To the country, no doubt; the mountains produced centenarians as they produced great oaks. His regime? He had none. He ate what all good people eat who have no teeth left. He repeated that earlier he had been a heavy eater; now he was a moderate one.

What was his earliest memory? He remembered, when he was twelve years old and was a shepherd on the mountains, taking part in a raid on a neighbouring village. There was in those days vendetta between village and village, mutual hate, mutual reprisals. The Abkhasia of old, from this point of view, yielded nothing to Corsica or Sicily. This, of course, was long before the Russian domination. He recalled perfectly well the fight and the carrying-off of booty, animate and inanimate, which followed it. At the age of twelve Nicholas was already as tall and strong as a man.

He had been married three times. His first wife, after bearing him several children, left him, carried away on a flood of Turkish emigration. His second wife died. She bore him three children, a son and

two daughters, all of whom had since died of old age, but had left children themselves. These grandchildren of Nicholas were still living in Abkhasia, in the province of Kador on the other side of the river. One of them had a son of forty, the great-grandson of my friend. His third wife, Assima, was with him. She was eighty-one, and they had had five children—four boys and a girl. I saw one son of forty-two, another of thirty-two, and the daughter, aged twenty-six.

One would have wished, of course, that a man who could use his eyes and his wits during nearly a century and a half of history, full of movement and revolution, should have been a witness of some of the great happenings of his lifetime, and talked with some of the outstanding figures who were his contemporaries. I once knew a centenarian who, as a boy, had met Napoleon in a path at Malmaison; and he gave me a very precise and vivid impression of the Emperor, particularly his "sharp and metallic voice." I have met in the Soviet Union other old men who evoked stirring passages of history; and some day, no doubt, I shall have occasion to speak of the strange feeling of direct contact which these encounters with eyewitnesses convey to one—something like a hopeless dream come true.

But Nicholas Chapkovski, the oldest of men, he who had lived through a span of destiny so much wider than anybody else in the world, could evoke nothing of the kind. He was only dramatic in himself, intrinsically. He had hardly ever left Abkhasia; to go to Karatchai had been his furthest adventure, and he knew no city greater than Soukhoum. (No doubt if he had seen

more of the world he would not have lived so long.) His observation, therefore, was limited to local happenings, such as punitive expeditions against neighbouring villages, and triumphant returns with captured women and beasts. He remembered also having witnessed the construction of Turkish barracks in the vicinity of Lati. I went to see them the next day. They were nothing but a long heap of remains of thick walls fallen into decay, collapsed and overgrown with trees. They gave the impression of ruins of antiquity, and their destruction dated back a hundred years.

"When I was young," he also told us, "there were hardly any trees and no forests at all anywhere near the village. One had to walk three days towards Karatchai to find any shade." It is true that this was formerly the case, but it was a great while ago. To-day the whole region is covered with a thick forest of tall, long-established trees. He could remember, too—and this again showed how far he could look back—that there was a time "when all the country as far as Kosta (near Sotchi) and the whole of Svanetia were Abkhasian. The population was very dense in those days." It was true; Abkhasia in the course of modern history has seen its boundaries much reduced, and its population, which formerly was 200,000, has dwindled to about 70,000.

Did he realize himself how much he could remember if he tried? One of us asked him if he spoke Russian. "No," he replied, "I used to speak Russian, but I have forgotten it." Then it occurred to Ignat to stand in front of him and question him in Russian. He replied immediately—in Russian. The incident

made a great impression on me. How much, I wondered, could one not extract out of his drowsy memory if one spent some time with him and tried systematically to awaken his capacity for recollection?

Did he know that his country was now living under a new regime? Yes, he knew. Asked for his opinion about this regime, he said that the Soviet Government seemed to him to be good, but that under any regime some are more favoured than others. He in any case is not without resources. He has, as I have said, a little house, and he also has a cow. He lives in the care of his son. He has, besides, a pension of fifteen roubles (two hundred francs) a month. On my return I took the liberty of begging my comrades in the Government of the Republic to increase this pension a little.

Our long interview had a touching ending. The old man was apparently on the point of kissing my hand. I took him in my arms, and carefully embraced his frail and precious person. Then I returned to Soukhoum, determined to find out definitely the authentic age of Nicholas Chapkovski. The supercentenarian has no legal papers to confirm it. His *dossier* as a pensioner, dated 1927, which I saw at the Poor Relief Offices, bears the age a hundred and forty, but makes no mention of any official document. Against this almost supernatural age of a hundred and forty one may set: the robust appearance of the old man; the age of his three youngest children; and finally the conflicting opinions in the district itself as to the number of years which have rolled over his head.

On the other hand, one may reply to the first two arguments—noting in passing that the age of children

can only have an absolutely scientific value as regards the mother, not the father—by pointing to the extraordinary vitality of the old man. And as to the conflict of local public opinion, which in any case one might expect to find in such a region, it may be emphasized that even the most inveterate sceptics, the most obstinate disputants of his claims, all concede that the *starik* of Lati is at least a hundred and twenty years of age.

There is no doubt at all that he is prodigiously old. Testimonies such as that of his niece, old Aroumsouda, a very intelligent woman whose evidence is quite positive, and of many other very old people who even in their own childhood knew him as a man of great age, have convinced me that the traditional figure of a hundred and forty is somewhere near the mark. Let us not forget that he has a great-grandson of forty. Besides, the official who in 1927 wrote the age of a hundred and forty on his pension papers did not put down that startling figure without very good reason.

In any case there are means of making sure. For lack of time it was impossible for me to put the matter beyond all doubt myself. It would involve a series of methodical questionings of the old man himself, his relations, and his friends and neighbours; the collation of various recollections; the systematic genealogical study of his descendants and collaterals; and research in archives and documents. I approached the Scientific Society of Abkhasia with a request that it should undertake an investigation along these lines. I hope that it will put in hand such an inquiry into a matter which is of national, of scientific, and indeed of social interest.

And I am sure that this learned body will be able to throw a searchlight upon the exact beginning of one of the longest roads that any man has ever trodden upon this earth.[1]

[1] Six months after writing the above as an article in *Monde* I received a long letter from Gueguelia, who told me about a visit which he had just paid to Nicholas Chapkovski, whose pension, in accordance with my request, had been doubled. Gueguelia informed me that the careful inquiry which he had carried out went to show that the patriarch of the mountains of Abkhasia was certainly at least a hundred and forty years old. He added that the old man showed signs of failing.

V

THE MONSTROUS HOUSE

I HAD seen it under construction when I went to Kharkov in October 1927. In the middle of an enormous square one perceived something like a range of mountains covered with scaffolding. Four thousand men were working on it. One saw that great army of ants busying themselves over the Cyclopean skeleton of a building, but so far removed were they that one could not hear the noise of their hammers or the least echo of their din. At the foot of that enormous sketch of a façade, up and down which the workmen climbed by ropes like sailors, there was a huge collection of constructional material and temporary buildings.

The House of Industry, I was told at that time, was begun in 1926, and should be finished in 1928. That was two years ago. Well, there it stands: the largest house, I believe, in the world, or at least in Europe —I do not know whether there is anything comparable in America. This house is more than 300 metres long and 75 metres high. It covers 9,850 square metres, and it has six hectares of floors and 1200 rooms, some of which are great halls eight metres high and thirty metres square. Its volume is 340,000 cubic metres.

Such were the architect's specifications, which were shown me fifteen months ago. I saw the completed building when I returned to Kharkov at the beginning

of 1929. In the great square, now cleared of the timber yards, the workshops, and the various buildings which encumbered it—a whole section of a city, with cultural institutions for the workers, a library, a theatre, a post office, and so on—the building soared, precise and clear as the architect's design. It looked like half a street of great grey palaces of dizzy height.

Do not imagine, however, that this prodigious edifice lacks unity. On the contrary, the House of Industry, with its semi-circular frontage and the symmetrical balance of its wings, which vary from seven to thirteen stories high, gives as a whole a very favourable impression. A painter could reproduce its harmony, but (unless the photograph is taken from a great distance away) photography, with its foreshortenings, its sharpened perspectives, and its flattening and distortion of curves, does no justice to this achievement of artistic realism. You can only photograph the building effectively in sections.

Constructed throughout, so far as its outer sheathing is concerned, of reinforced concrete and plate glass, the House of Industry has for its object the housing of the State industries or Trusts, to the number of twenty —the majority being of the Ukraine alone, but some, notably the Steel Trust with its 1600 employees, of the whole U.S.S.R. In addition to offices it includes social rooms, lecture rooms, dining rooms, clubs, a hotel with fifty-six rooms, intended for the accommodation of business visitors; libraries, post and telegraph offices, banks, lawyers' offices, a wireless station, a pneumatic installation for the internal distribution of the post, and a whole range of rooms for the staff.

When everything that it embraces within its walls is taken into account, a considerable saving has been effected in its cost price as compared with that of buildings of normal size—say half as much to the square metre. Moreover, the arrangement of the offices and services has been carried out in what one might call a perfectly rational way, with the means of circulation and communication exactly fitted to the needs. There is a whole network of exits and entrances. Six bridges lead from one part of the building to another—covered bridges twenty metres long, and from fifteen to twenty-five metres above the ground—and lifts assure rapid movement, laterally as well as vertically, in the enormous labyrinth inside. All the twelve hundred rooms of the House communicate. You can, if you like, walk through them one after another—that is, of course, if you have made the necessary preliminary study of their geography.

I do not propose to dwell on the details of the House, or seek to show exactly what close regard has been paid in its planning to the most modern developments and the latest improvements which have been made in building in reinforced concrete. I shall take only one example of the attention which has been devoted to every element in its construction both from the practical and the technical points of view. The roofs, which are flat and terraced, are constructed in successive layers as follows: tarred cork, bituminated pasteboard, compressed rubble, three layers of pasteboard coated with a special insulation which is manufactured in the House itself, a thick sheet of this substance, and, finally, stonework.

The number of people who work in the House is about seven thousand. Visitors are estimated at one thousand a day. The lifts number eighteen, of which four are Italian and twelve Russian (*Mocelprom*). Each lift holds six to twelve persons, and the whole gigantic mechanism of ascent and descent functions on the assumption that the entire personnel of the House can be transported from the street to their offices in forty minutes, and be completely evacuated in the same time.

The whole House is full of machines, great and small, from the machines which serve for the reproduction of architectural plans and diagrams for all the internal services, to the various machines which operate in the colossal kitchens; the innumerable calculating and typewriting machines (the offices where the typists work are carpeted with a curious plaited stuff, intended to deaden the sound of the typewriters); and the marvellous telephone installation, whose enormous ramifications are supervised by a single employee, since almost the whole service is automatic. There are sixteen hundred separate telephone instruments in the House.

Heating is provided by sixteen boilers. Ventilation and water circulation function through a giant skeleton of pipes, tanks, filters, and taps, which handle 160,000 litres of water a day. The public water supply of Kharkov did not give sufficient pressure to force the water up to the top of the House. It was therefore necessary to instal a gigantic equipment of pumps and tanks. To meet the case of fire special rules have been framed, and certain employees are charged with

the responsibility of doing everything necessary to bring the fire under control, evacuate the staff, and prevent panic. There are two hundred water points specially installed to fight an outbreak of fire.

The construction of the House of Industry cost from 40 to 50 roubles the cubic metre. The total cost amounted to 15 million roubles, or 195 million francs. Let it be remembered that the building absorbed more than eight million kilos of iron, and more than twelve million kilos of concrete, and that it has 45,000 square metres of glass. The money was provided by the Trusts concerned, and the Industrial Banks. The decision to proceed with the building was taken in 1925 by the Economic Council of the Ukraine, and confirmed by the Central Economic Council. A temporary financial crisis suspended operations in 1926, but work was resumed in August of that year, with the help of funds advanced by the Central Committee of the Communist Party.

The architect of the House of Industry—whose plan was accepted after a competition—was Comrade Kravetz, assisted by Felger and Serafimovitch. Comrade Tchistov, as "Commandant" of the House of Industry, might be described as the Mayor of this extraordinary town under one roof.[1]

[1] I may mention here that the latest news which I have received from Kharkov reports, among other remarkable enterprises, the construction of another giant building, of 375,000 cubic metres, which will be completed in the spring of 1931.

VI

WHAT IS LEFT OF THE FAIR OF NIJNI

It 's an ill wind . . . Thanks to the illness which compelled me to stay some time at Nijni Novgorod, where I had intended to spend only a few hours, I was able to make this city's close acquaintance, probe into its corners, and question it and get to know both it and the country round about it. This business of making contact with it was full of charm and instruction, interest and admiration.

The setting is imposing—one of the finest in all the vast extent of Russia. I saw it first as a whole with a bird's-eye view, the view of an eagle's eye; for I was eight hundred metres up in the air, in a seaplane of the *Ossoaviakim*. I have never got used to the moving spectacle which cities present to those who thus look down from the air upon their whole extent and form. I saw two great watercourses, long and wide as two arms of the sea: the Oka and the Volga. On these broad, shining spaces, sown with boats, in the midst of a forest of masts, I saw giant passenger and merchant ships making their way.

At the moment when the seaplane took off from the water and began to climb into the sky I had seen close to me those enormous floating tanks which transport petrol from the Caspian, looking in their metallic redness like fortresses. The hulls of the passenger

ships, many-decked and white-painted, seemed like the fronts of houses; one would have said that bits of new streets had taken to the water. But when the seaplane had carried us up into the air and begun to trace in the void the dizzying outline of a mountain top, the people on the ground dwindled to lines of dots, the rivers assumed their proper form of rivers, and the enormous barges seemed like swimming mayflies, of which soon nothing was to be seen but their triangular wake a thousand times bigger than themselves. So, too, from that mechanical observation-post hanging clamorous in the air, nothing was to be seen of the immense pontoon bridge which spans the junction of Oka and Volga but the ripple which the tramways crossing it spread over the water.

Then, from my roaring, speeding seat, I saw in the depths below me the map of Nijni unroll. On the right bank of the Volga lay outspread the town in miniature: its little red roofs each in its own wide setting of green; the precipitous *rond-point*, encircled too in green and crowned by the Kremlin, contemporary with that of Moscow, and looking like a child's toy. In the streets I could see oblong carriages like larvæ, horses like flies, and people mere dots of punctuation picked out in colour. I thought of the variegated delicacy of those lovely paintings that the *Koustaris* make on the lids of lacquer boxes.

Nijni Novgorod! The name is known all over the world. Everybody with any education at all has heard of it. It calls to mind an ancient city, founded at the same time as Moscow, with a picturesque and tragic history; and it calls to mind especially in our times

the Fair, that almost legendary Fair held in the heart of the greatest country, and on the banks of the greatest river of Europe. The period of the Fair used to be one of extraordinary activity. Nijni Novgorod was turned upside down, full of distinguished visitors and wealthy merchants, and the great business Fair was transformed into a great society festival, with champagne flowing in streams.

I talked about it to an old lady, the wife of a man formerly in a large way of business here. This *ci-devant*, very worthy and respectable in her old-fashioned way, could not forbear from comparing the past and the present. "It was one long stream," she said. "Great and small, everybody came here. A few years ago there was a special service of aeroplanes from Moscow to Nijni. The Fair poured another town-full into the city. Now, you see what remains: the great building on the left bank and the bazaars of samples. (We were at the moment in the middle of the Fair season.) All the other buildings have been pulled down or are deserted. Look at that great enclosure, which formerly at this time was swarming with people; it is a rubbish yard where they shoot bricks."

It is a fact that the Fair of Nijni, which lasts from the beginning of July to mid-September, is in decay and its glory in eclipse. The interior of the "Great Building" on the left bank is nothing but a multiple shop, where salesmen and saleswomen in national costume sell some characteristic products of the different parts of the Union—the Ukraine, White Russia, the Caucasus. There are also some non-Russian, Oriental stalls, Persian and Afghan. The old lady, venerable relic

of a phase of history that is gone, sighed again as she pointed to the ships in the Volga. "Traffic is not what it was. This activity is not to be compared with what it used to be."

Has Nijni, then, really lost its old splendour? Let us not jump hastily to any such conclusion. Let us look at the question from all angles, like people of common sense, not men of letters.

Walk down the Sverdlovskaia, the principal street of Nijni, with its fine shops, its theatre, and its bank. Let us follow it along. It runs through a suburb with elegant wooden houses. Beyond a very large square, which has strangely preserved the old classic Russian style, the street becomes a road which leads towards Mouiza across plains where, at long intervals, there rise imposing masses of buildings: prisons, proud work of the Tsars, and barracks.

Having reached the barracks, let us cut across the fields to our right for a short distance. We realize suddenly that we are on the edge of a cliff which plunges steeply down for more than a hundred metres. Below us the Oka runs its majestic course. From this observation point we can also see the Volga in the distance, and as far as the eye can reach we have below us a striking spectacle on the banks of the two rivers. There is, first, an enormous storehouse of balks of timber, neatly stacked on the exposed sandy bed of the river. Beyond it are rows and blocks of factories, a forest of chimneys, whole working-class quarters.

This is industrial Nijni, which has arisen as a new city beside old Nijni. The two cities, joined and united, will make, one day, Great Nijni Novgorod. It is one

more upthrusting of that voluminous life which sprang from the October Revolution, this industrialization of a region at a rapid pace along a boldly conceived plan. In old Nijni itself there are already evidences of the realization of this plan. I have seen under construction, or already finished, factories and schools, a "Faculty of Mechanics," buildings to house scientists. I know that the University, twin sister of the First University of Moscow, has had to extend its premises to accommodate its three thousand students, and that there are eight *technicums* in the city and any number of courses of technical instruction besides.

I have visited the wireless laboratory, which, with that of Leningrad, is the most important in the Soviet Union, and serves all the radio-telephonic centres. This laboratory, which dates from 1920, is installed in what were formerly a seminary and a wax-taper factory. Its directors are men not only of learning but also of inventive genius. I have seen there the Vladimir Ilitch lamp, which is the most powerful in the world, and some wonderfully perfect apparatus, constructed on the spot, at the foot of the two antennæ sixty-five metres high.

But it is especially outside the city that the great movement of reconstruction and re-birth is in progress. The metal factories of Sormovo, on the banks of the Volga, gave employment before the war to 13,000 workers; they now have 18,000. The value of their production was twenty-one million roubles, and is now forty-eight million. The innumerable, endless buildings, covering nearly five kilometres, are growing obsolete, and new workshops are under construction.

One sees the enormous frameworks of them in the countryside.

Sormovo is now building 10,000-ton oil tankers. I have been on board two of them, the *Lenin* and the *Profintern*, which, nearly finished but still resounding to the final hammer-strokes, lay in the Volga, their steel silhouettes looking like those of transatlantic liners. Two other gigantic shells formed two sections of tunnel as they lay on the dry bed of an arm of the river, where the spring will bring back the water to float the hulls of the then completed craft. This year two ships and five barges have been launched, and next year five ships and fifteen barges will be launched. Other parts of the industrial city of Sormovo are devoted to the construction of locomotives, wagons, tramcars, and motors. Sormovo has already 50,000 inhabitants, nearly half as many as Nijni (120,000).

At Kanavino, another part of these colossal suburbs which Great Nijni is in course of assimilating, there are now 70,000 inhabitants, as compared with 44,000 four years ago. This is an absolutely new quarter, where the tramway has only run during the past two years. It has three hundred new workers' houses, each containing four flats, which I visited, and an almost completed Palace of Work, with a gigantic reinforced concrete frontage, which our car took a considerable time to circumnavigate. It cost a million and a half roubles, and its entertainment hall will hold 2,500 people. Beside it I saw an orphan asylum in course of construction, and a completed maternity home. In the whole quarter there are fifteen factories and 26,000 workers.

Everywhere immense new enterprises are rising out of the ground all around old Nijni. There is a hydro-electric works which at the moment delivers only 20,000 kilowatts of power, but which will deliver 42,000 by next February, 64,000 in a year, and finally 100,000. There is the largest paper-mill in Europe, now almost finished, which extends for three kilometres along the Volga. It seizes hold of thirty-five-metre tree trunks, which are floated down stream in bulk from the north, and these trunks, fished up by monstrous cranes, are fed automatically and without stopping through twelve enormous buildings of six or seven stories and forty metres high. The wood, as soon as it is caught up, is first sawn, then stripped of its bark, finally pulped, and it comes out at the other end in a strip of paper six metres wide. Merely to transform the timber into pulp the factory uses daily ten million *vedros* of water—as much as the whole of Moscow used in 1913. This factory alone will furnish half the newsprint necessary for all the papers published in the Soviet Union (500,000 tons).

The cellulose factory is not yet finished. Only one machine out of two is so far working, but its completion is only a matter of months. Beside it has arisen a complete working town with a hundred houses, a club, a school, a hospital, a fire brigade, and so on. There are many other things which one can see to-day, or will be able to see to-morrow, in the outer suburbs of Nijni, or even in the zone which one can command within eyes' range from the top of the riverine cliff beside the barracks. One notable project, which will be undertaken next year, is a vast glass factory,

and another is a tunnel under the Volga below Nijni.

I have been given particulars of any number of definite projects. They look towards nothing less than making Nijni one of the greatest productive centres of the whole U.S.S.R., one of its industrial capitals. Nijni already holds the leading position in Russia-in-Europe in respect of the production of paper, glass, chemicals, and leather. At the same time it has not ceased to be an agricultural centre, and the average of its crops is excellent.

Here, in parenthesis, I may say something about that "Commune" of Bogarodska which is half agricultural and half industrial, since its business is tanning. It made last year more than 30,000 roubles, and it assures to the 212 people who exploit its 500 hectares an income of 2·40 to 2·80 roubles a day for adults, and 40 kopecks for children. Let it be borne in mind that private enterprise in the region of Nijni brings in an average of 82 roubles a year for *seredniaks* and 72 for *biednaks*.

I am not the only person to meditate over this comparison. The peasants are meditating over it also, with that imperious realism of theirs which, wrongly judged abroad, is lightly called religiosity. They realize that everybody has an interest in collective labour. The evidence of facts convinces them—and here, undoubtedly, is the solution of the Soviet agrarian question. There is more than one who, contemplating with a jaundiced eye his bullock or his horse so weak from lack of nourishment at the end of a bad season that it has to be supported by a belly-band tied

to the ceiling, thinks of the 2·80 roubles a day of the members of the Commune, and understands what Socialism means.

In short, for all these reasons which I have hastily summarized above, it is with no great emotion that one sees the Fair of Nijni Novgorod take a back seat. As a matter of fact it is not being neglected, but merely adapted to the new conditions of a sweeping industrial revolution. How different the conditions are may be gauged from the fact that formerly more than fifty large textile manufacturers from the district of Ivanovo Vosnesenska alone competed for custom in the market-place of Nijni. Now their place is taken by a single State Trust.

It is entirely wrong, therefore, to fix one's gaze obstinately on the disused and rubbish-strewn enclosures of the old Fair, and talk about retrogression and decay. On the contrary, it is towards a destiny much more brilliant, and much more beneficial, that the growing Nijni is methodically directing itself. To achieve this destiny it must clear the ground and rationalize itself. If I have the chance of returning to Nijni Novgorod in five or six years, what changes I shall be sure of finding there! There is no doubt that by then Great Nijni will have earned the name which it is preparing for itself; and it will deserve more than ever in its famous history the surname of Novgorod: the New City.

And I am sure, too, that, for all the multiplication and perfection of industrialism, I shall still recover the incomparable poetic charm of that city, with its immense valley of two rivers which one can survey

from end to end, and at every turn of whose slopes there opens a vista dizzying in its majesty; its spacious, smiling streets with their picturesque farmers' houses, which are sometimes like the streets of an overgrown village, but in which the bulbous clock-towers, parti-coloured, gilt, or silvered, jostle factory chimneys, and the pylons, the antennæ, the framework, and the spiders' webs of wireless telegraphy.

It will still be a spacious city of wide horizons, laved by the winds of heaven, with its great ships floating on its giant rivers, with flights of crows wheeling where it merges into its stern, but always impressive country-side—a city which suddenly, in sun or shadow, takes on an aspect of the infinite, and leaves in the mind's eye and in the hearts of its guests an unforgettable allure.

VII

CRIMEA STERN AND SWEET

I

SINCE I have visited the coast of the Crimea an inveterate instinct of the man of letters has tempted me at every turn to draw a parallel between this region and the French *Côte d'Azur*, where, during the war, I had to spend several months every year, and which I know very well. The same old instinct has already forced me, in my travels about the Union, to compare the scenic settings of the Soviet Continent with those of other countries, and to try and find elements and features common to the landscapes round about me, general traits of which one could say: Here is something characteristic in the aspect of the Russian Republics. Men of letters are the slaves of generalization, and when they travel they take their repertory of the picturesque with them, and have to play their game of similarities and contrasts.

At first sight it would seem somewhat ridiculous to attempt any general description of a whole as diverse and extensive as "the other Europe," to borrow the phrase of Luc Durtain. (I sincerely hope that the Soviet Union will never be another Europe, and even more sincerely that Europe will become another

Soviet Union.) But I think I have discovered the common denominator of the Russian, as of the Ukrainian or Caucasian landscape: it is *grandeur*.

In no part of the world does Nature—even when she is invaded by the tillage and the towns of men—communicate to us such an impression of immensity, sometimes desolating in its estrangement from mankind, sometimes steeped in human melancholy and sadness, as one experiences in what was the land of the Tsars. Perhaps that element of fatalism in all grandeur which is present in the countryside has had its influence upon the development of that Russian soul, so worthy of admiration, to which one finally penetrates through the conventional legends, the outworn formulæ, and the political prejudices current abroad.

Where Nature comes in contact with the West and its civilization she is, as it were, more manufactured, her scenes are better composed, more framed in architecture, more finished, more genteel, and more polished. In Switzerland or in Italy, there is something smiling in the most spacious landscapes. Towards the East there is less cultivation of the soil and less density of building, and you have visions of immensity, vistas without end, landscapes without finish. The outskirts of the towns, the roads, the plains, the beds of rivers, the shores of the sea, the crests of mountains, have a sweep and a starkness which at any moment assume majesty and impressiveness.

Frequently, at widely removed points of the U.S.S.R., in the north, the centre, or the south, on a mountain summit, at a cross-roads — with nothing but the telegraph poles standing above the horizon—on a

highway with only an occasional wooden house, or above some rock-bound coast, I have experienced the impression of boundlessness, and of a monotony at once insidious and troubling. I cannot help thinking that here is the essential difference, in the general scope and the specific development of their art, between the French novelists and the Russian novelists in the great period of the novel. The one have the charm of measure and proportion; the others have immensity.

And if one is to compare the south coast of the Crimea which plunges into the Black Sea with the Franco-Italian *Côte d'Azur* which, beginning at Saint-Raphael, passes through Cannes, Nice, Monte-Carlo, Mentone, and Bordighera to Genoa, there is this to be said at once: the Crimean landscape is less harmonious, less colourful, but grander, wilder, and more vivid. As soon as the train which brings you from Russia proper and the Ukraine runs into daylight—at Simferopol, about four o'clock in the morning—you are in a landscape of desolation, in which all the bony structure of the peninsula is exposed.

It is a country of heights and depths, of ravines and peaks, of uncertain ground—which is liable at any moment, as at this time last year for example, to slide like a landscape in a film tragedy—of bare steppe, ochre and grey, the colour of dust and of stone, but sown here and there with oases of green. In the valleys and the hollows, and, in some districts, on the slopes of the mountains, vegetation has gained a foothold in the earth, and emerges in orchards, gardens, fields, and trees, singly or in groves.

At Sevastopol I left the train for a motor-car, and, when we had traversed mountains as sterile as gigantic fortresses in ruins, deep, wooded valleys opened all around me. Then, suddenly, there came a vision which swept away the memory of the impressive scenes through which we had passed. We had crossed the top of the pass and reached a threshold which gave upon the sea, and from that doorway—Baidarskie Vorota—high up on the southern face of the Crimea, all the coastline of the country lay spread beneath our eyes.

From that strip of road enthroned upon the heights and suspended giddily above the depths one looked down in a flash over rocks, trees, parks, palaces, and the sands hundreds of metres below, which slowly led the eyes through the immense proportions of the landscape to the distant deep blue sea fringed with white at its edge.

In spite of the splendour of certain points where the red rocks of the Estérel cascade into the sea, and the striking transformation scenes along that coast of rocks white as marble between Nice and Monte-Carlo, there is nothing in our Western Riviera to equal the spaciousness of this view over the Crimean coast. Besides, the mountains along the Mediterranean coast do not exceed three or four hundred metres, while the summits of the escarpment which falls to the Crimean coast are twice as high. All along that coast, or, rather, all above that coast of Simiis, Aloupka, Yalta, Sououk-Sou, Alouchta, for more than a hundred kilometres of cornice road, where the car glides above the gulf of green and blue, one has the same impression, which

may be summed up as astonishment at the grandeur of the scene.

The Black Sea resembles the Mediterranean like a more sombre sister. The tradition which gave it this name certainly went by comparison with the Mediterranean, and tradition was not at fault. The Black Sea is really blackish, by contrast with the brilliant waters which bathe the South of France, Sicily, or Algeria. In full sunlight it is very nearly as blue (not quite; the eye preserves the memory of a *nuance*); but as soon as a cloud covers the sun it becomes slate-coloured, and evening mottles it with black and a sickly green, like heavy petroleum.

One might say that here the layers of cobalt, *outremer*, or Prussian blue, which are spread upon the French and Italian Mediterranean, have been diluted with a dose or two of black. But, apart from this detail, the waves have the same sweet gaiety and tropical beauty, the same caress for the eye, and present the same sharp contrast with the dead bluish-green oceans which flow and ebb on the other coasts of Europe.

To compare the vegetation of the two regions is to evoke a pretty botanical poem, as the pre-Romantics of the eighteenth century loved to do. In the Crimea, in those smiling districts which are so clearly defined against the immense background of its volcanic structure, there are about equal proportions of trees which shed their leaves in winter and of evergreens: pines, firs, larches, and, above all, cypresses. The cypress—that black lace-work with its sharp, lofty points, which runs sometimes in a straight line,

sometimes in a sinuous curve along the base of a grey mountain; that army of dark, slender statues, in groups, in single or double file, in battalions, more dense than on any coast of Italy—is one of the characteristics of the shores of the Crimea.

But these trees as of black marble, playing a part in domestic architecture, are here surrounded by oaks, acacias, and walnuts. Poplars alternate in friendly fashion with the cypresses—tall forms like them in their silhouette, but the one light green and the other dark green; the one transparent, with its sparse foliage trembling in the wind and shot with light, leaving free play to the gestures of the branches which raise their arms to the sky, the other dense and thick as a monk's cowl or a majestic extinguisher.

On the French Riviera there are much fewer trees with deciduous leaves; in many regions there are none at all. These are an almost exclusively African vegetation, which are greener in winter than in summer, when they are somewhat dried-up: maritime pines, eucalyptus, myrtle, cactus, aloes, palms, lentisks, arbutus—all aromatic plants with pulpy leaves and thick sap. The fig, which has to renew its foliage every year, hardly finds a place among them.

In the Crimea these plants, great and small, are not exotic. One finds here that green, tender in its sweetness and fragility, of leaves light but immortal on their branches, which is excluded from the narrow segment of African climate that encroaches upon the south of France. Besides, the Mediterranean country is very poor in soil near the sea. It is in general a land of thickets, with only little patches, little rugs

of cultivable earth spread here and there on the rocks.

The Crimea, despite its rocky coast, has more plentiful resources of soil. One sees here gigantic trees in great number, together with rare specimens which the landowners, the rich bourgeois, and the opulent merchants of earlier times installed in the parks of their villas, which now serve as houses of rest: cedars of Lebanon, araucarias, sequoias. At Artek there is a marsh cypress, a tree of which only a few specimens exist in the world. Time and the development of life have finally made these artificial parks an integral part of the maritime Crimea.

If in the adornment of its vegetation it is less exotic than the south-east coast of France—which belongs organically to the *maquis* of Corsica and the mainland of Africa—the coast of the Crimea has more character, more variety, a more signal and striking spontaneity. It is, besides, less exploited. Our Riviera, into the marrow of whose bones the cosmopolitan-de-luxe has insinuated himself, has hardly a handful left which has not been invaded by freestone, or concrete, or plaster, or balustrades, or parks. In the Crimea the monstrous establishments of some great personages had not that character of systematic organization which enslaves a whole countryside, including its inhabitants, to the rich visitor, and which has finished by giving even our sea-washed rocks something of the air of shop-windows.

The countryside is not here, as on the French Riviera, purely and simply a suburb of the watering-places. In the Crimea, even right on the water-front

of the blue-black sea, there are peasants and villages; Turkish houses built as they always were, and, on the slopes, sheds in the olden style on which strings of tobacco leaves are hung out to dry. There are swarthy peasants in Astrakhan (or imitation Astrakhan) caps, carrying tobacco leaves strung on sticks which rustle like silk as they swing. There are groups of women with coloured veils, looking in the distance like clusters of flowers. (These Tatars, however, no longer wear veils across their faces.) There are mosques—which play a less important part than formerly—and Turkish cemeteries, where the monuments are stone-headed, and even stone-hatted. In the sacred disorder in which Moslem burial-grounds must be left, these monuments, as a result of the earthquakes, end by leaning and tottering in all directions.

On the *Côte d'Azur* there is no peasantry, since the natives, by force of circumstances, have become tradesmen or servants of the rich. There are practically no villages; one finds along the roads hardly anything but villas, palaces, restaurants, and garages. Everywhere, however, in the maritime zone of the Crimea, as on that French Riviera, where I went to work a few weeks ago when I exiled myself from the U.S.S.R., there is a floating population, momentarily attracted by the advantages of the country.

The conquest of the Crimea forty-five years ago marked the definite victory of Great Russia over the Tatars. The Tsars were prouder of no other part of their Empire, and none was so much envied by the Great Powers. Russian high society made periodical descents upon it. It is more than a hundred years

since Poushkin went to the Crimea, where he stayed a fortnight in the house of General Raievski, with whose daughter Marie he was in love. The house stands there still, empty and mournful, with an air of abandonment, living on its past until it finds a use.

Set back a few paces from the sea and a little above it, surrounded by enormous old trees which were certainly growing there a hundred years ago, it is as touching and as beautiful as the Villa San Vigilio, which adorns with a holy grace the shores of Lake Garda. It is symmetrical, proud, and aloof, reminiscent of a mausoleum with its great cypresses, vast as black, shadowy clock-towers, ranged here and there along the noble classic triangle of its many-windowed façade. It takes its rest from men, silent and idle, at one end of the park of Gourzouf where eleven magnificent sanatoriums shelter three hundred soldiers of the Red Army.

It was about the time of the episode of Poushkin that the Crimea had a remarkable visitation. The Princess Galitzin, the Baroness Krüdener, and the Countess de Gachet arrived from the north by ship, down the Volga, then by the Don and the Black Sea, and disembarked at Yalta. They were three very mystical, not to say visionary, ladies, and the last was none other than that Marie de la Mothe who played a part in the pre-revolutionary affair of the Queen's Necklace, on which Alexander Dumas embroidered a story possibly less authentic, but certainly more entertaining, than history.

My friend, Comrade Solovieva (wife of the man who has transformed Artek into a health colony, and a

paradise for school-children, of whom a thousand are taken in every year), was very well informed upon the more intimate personal details of history, as well as its larger outlines. She gave me some well-documented information upon the precise identity of this mysterious traveller who haunted the coasts of the Crimea about 1820 under the name of the Countess de Gachet. She even pointed out to me the exquisite little house which was almost certainly her retreat, right on the edge of the sea, between the mountain of the Bear and the rock of Gourzouf.

Later, part of the country passed from the hands of the aristocrats into those of the great merchants. One still finds in the park of Artek, flying in the breeze, which has carried them from some cellar not yet emptied, old bottle labels bearing the signature of that man of substance who, in the time of the Tsars, was lord of the vineyards, the woods, the houses—and the men—of the district.

To-day the floating population of the Crimea consists only of manual workers and intellectuals. Here we come to the most strongly marked difference between the Soviet Crimea and the region which more or less corresponds to it in the West. At Cannes and Nice hotels and private houses are occupied by few French people, and by many foreigners diverse in their origins, and alike only on their spending capacity. On the coast of the Black Sea there are only citizens of the Union (together with a few citizens of the International). One may heighten the contrast by saying that here there are workers come for rest, not idle people come for a change of amusement.

They are to be distinguished, these two human species, from one end to the other of the old Eastern half of Europe, by their bearing and behaviour, not by their type; for there is no physical type of citizen of the Union. I would go further. There may be certain specific types in certain populations of the Union: for example, the Mongol type, the Kirghiz type, the Armenian type. Even so, all the individuals who make up these populations do not necessarily conform to this type; and in the case of the last especially the type has been deformed and debased by hard usage and cross-breeding. At all events, however, there is no such thing as a Russian type. The existence of such a type is a foreign myth.

As a matter of fact the native inhabitants of the great Russian centres form the most heteroclite collection of faces that is to be seen anywhere. There are pure-blooded Russians of all shapes and forms, and very few indeed of them conform to the artistic models consecrated by stage and story: the mustachioed noble, the hirsute and nihilistic intellectual, and the *moujik* with his face entirely covered with hair (the bewhiskered diplomat is nowadays only a museum piece or a figure of light opera). You would have to search a long time in the streets of Moscow or any other large town, or in the villages, to discover any material traces of these time-honoured physiognomies.

In just the same way you would have to search a long time among the workers in caps who throng the Galata bridge at the end of the day's work to find the classic, or rather the romantic, image of the Turk. Here, as everywhere else in the world, the characteristics

of races have more or less disappeared in the hustle and bustle of contemporary life. Here, as everywhere else, the fundamental traits of races persist, if at all, only in their headgear and their clothes.

But here, more than anywhere else, a wind blew a dozen years ago which has changed everything in these latitudes. So much the worse for those who have not yet realized it. The present generation of Russians is very visibly proletarianized. I have said so already, but I want to stress the point. If there is in Russia a unified race, it is not an ethnical race; it is a race of fighters, of soldiers of labour, a race in which is diffused working and peasant blood, and also, and even more widely, the proletarian spirit—the clear-sightedness, the energy, the balance, the vitality, and the physical health of the giant people.

With features which recall as readily those of the French or the Germans, or even the Anglo-Saxons, as those of the Slavs, the men and women of the Soviet country convey above all the impression of a new and young human species: all the freshness, all the force, all the fury of a beginning—a humanity in mobilization. Those who have achieved the Proletarian Revolution, as Napoleon said of himself, are not descendants; they are ancestors.

Just here I may say, in parenthesis, that there is in fact a "Russian type," and, by a curious coincidence, it is largely on our French *Côte d'Azur* that one can find it without going to much trouble. It is the aristocratic type, which flaunted it before the war in St. Petersburg, in Moscow, and in Cosmopolis. It is a queer type, strange and seductive: the women feline, with a

startling and sinister beauty, a "fatal" beauty, as we used to say; the men with the lean but luxurious grace of borzoi dogs, with eyes which, in many cases, have something of the look of madmen, and—as a physiologist has pointed out to me—a certain curious roundness about their skulls. One sees these fascinating beings in the circles to which the White Russians resort: in some fashionable Russian restaurants, among the taxi drivers of Paris, into whose ranks the former Tsarist nobles and officers have flocked, and among the street sweepers and dustmen of Cannes, which is full of officers and soldiers of the Empire and of Wrangel—not to speak of the Grand Ducal *salons*.

To resume: the great difference which I find between the Crimea and the *Côte d'Azur*—those two regions which, in spite of everything, are essentially of the same order—is in the people who come there, the flowing and ebbing human tide of visitors which periodically animates them. With us it is a fashionable or would-be fashionable crowd, aristocratic or *petite-aristocratique*, which comes to amuse itself, to forget itself, and to exhibit itself. In the Crimea it is a crowd of workers who come to refresh themselves. Among the innumerable houses of rest and sanatoriums in the Union, those of the Crimea share with those of the Caucasus the advantage of climate, of a sky which is of an incandescent purity for months on end and makes spring, summer, and autumn a fairyland of light and heat.

(To be just, one ought to concede that the *Côte d'Azur* does gain a point in the winter, since there warmth and clear skies persist during it, whereas in the Crimea there

is cold and snow. The Crimea, as we noted in our summary review of its flora above, is not tropical by nature and temperament; the grasshoppers do not sing there from July to October. It is a temperate corner of Nature which for three-quarters of the year benefits by an extraordinary amount of sunshine.)

My Soviet comrades really understand holidays. They have rationalized them. The month of relaxation plays in everybody's life not an anecdotal, but an organic role. One devotes himself to repose as one does to a sport, and it is certainly a sport of which the habit is easily acquired. I who have never had a holiday for several years got the taste for it here. One ends by experiencing a need to walk, to eat, to be touched by the sun, to surrender oneself to the heavily charged sea air, to be massaged by the wind. It is a profound process of cleansing to which one yields oneself. The relaxation is worth while because it prepares one for work. After such a regime one can work for eleven months with all that keenness which good comrades know how to display.

I was told at Moscow that quite new theories regarding repose as a direct factor in labour are being developed. These are directed towards a much stricter system of alternating rest with work in order to attain the utmost possible output. The handling of a job *en bloc*, with no more method than that of workers falling over one another, has been relegated to the Old Guard. The young understand a more rational way of going about their business. They are certainly right, and they will be all the stronger for it.

As soon as one arrives here he changes his habits

all at once, while waiting to change his skin—which does not take long. This vast landscape of the Crimea, intoxicating in its dynamic strength, with its verdant valleys, its oases of white houses, and its colonnades of black trees, is peopled in the sunlight with bodies the colour of baked brick and shoulders the colour of red rubber. Sun bathing paints them with a first coat of yellow ochre, and then a second coat of tincture of iodine. On the seats, under the trees, all along the beaches, plump bodies of a red shading into violet recall Renoir's later manner. The majority are pictures of health, and one sees many splendidly athletic specimens among these forms which, reverently surrendering their skins to the ardent kisses of the sun, pass within a month from the white race through the yellow and red to the black.

All is healthiness, simplicity, dignity, and good order. There is gaiety, but there is almost an element of gravity in this treatment which is followed with the object of being better fitted for one's job when one returns to it. These men and women who, by gradual exposure to the sun's rays, first brown and then cook their white townspeoples' bodies, like a smoker who lovingly "colours" a meerschaum pipe, are performing a duty with appropriate patience and seriousness.

There are no lewd ideas, no trace of viciousness. One is very far here from that covert sexuality, that hypocritical shamelessness, which is rampant in our great bathing places of Europe: in opulent Deauville, that concentration camp of snobbery, and even, despite their orderly management and their precise though picturesque draught-board arrangement, on the British

beaches and the German beaches of the North Sea and the Baltic—not to speak of New Jersey and Los Angeles, and even less of the *Côte d'Azur*!

In social and moral geography the Crimean sky is the antipodes of that equivocal and cosmopolitan atmosphere where the foreigner is at once the bully and the prostitute of luxury, and where the casinos are nothing but gigantic traps, into which the rich client is lured first by snobbery, then by the publicity of mercantile elegance, and finally by the subtle flattery of agents of both sexes.

The Crimea, of course, is not merely a place of relaxation. It has its own economic life, based mainly on the cultivation of the vine and the tobacco plant. I shall have occasion to speak later about this other side of this attractive country, and about the agricultural and industrial resources which Nature has provided, or can be induced to provide, in this peninsula about the size of Belgium. It is true that Nature has also made it—admittedly at long intervals—the scene of startling earthquakes, and that she has not favoured it from the point of view of water supply. The problem of irrigation is as formidable in the Crimea as in Transcaucasia or Turkestan. There are other problems here besides, which the Workers' and Peasants' State and the local authorities are facing or getting ready to face.

II

I have left the Crimea. For the last time I have sailed past Yalta, which, at night, like Nice or Naples, seems like an endless necklace of lights suspended in the

blue of heaven. The coast along which I sailed the next day was a sun-baked desert which attracted me very much. The region of oases had disappeared. The voyage was peaceful and yet majestic. It was fine weather, but in any case the *Tobolsk* is such a steady ship that you hardly know on board whether she is stopped or sailing, and you have to watch the coastline to realize that it is gliding past the apparently motionless vessel.

In all the accumulated splendour of days of settled weather, over seas in which the waves flung up into the sun crests of dark green and silver, with the shadows of birds with great white-tipped wings wheeling over our heads, we came to Feodocia. Then we arrived at Novorossisk, that great port the colour of cement, a cluster of horizontal lines made up of docks, warehouses, jetties, and quadrilaterals of chimneys and public buildings, picked out here and there with red spots, great stars, and banners, in honour of some ceremony.

We were as far from Moscow as Moscow is from Paris; but it was the Crimea no longer. And as we ploughed the eastern waters of the Black Sea, headed towards those earthly paradises of Sotchi, Gagri, and Soukhoum, in their eternal setting of green, my thoughts went back to the Crimea, and rested there. In my last section I looked at it only through the eyes of the tourist. Now I want to describe it from the practical point of view, and support my impressions with some documentary evidence, as an honest craftsman should.

The Crimea is a triangular peninsula, which seems like the lid of the Sea of Azov, on to which one of its

sides opens. Its area is 25,000 square kilometres—about the dimensions of Sicily, or the Peloponnese, or Danish Jutland. It has 705,000 inhabitants, of whom 500,000 are Tatars, and the remainder Greeks, Russians, and various other nationalities. It has nearly as many townspeople (321,000) as villagers (383,000).

This fascinating Crimean triangle, object of the desires of the Great Powers, all of whom have dreamed longingly of Sevastopol, was taken from Wrangel by the Bolsheviks in a single day—14 November, 1920. Besides his precious person, which he carried into seven years of exile, Wrangel was able to take nothing in his ships but the money and the precious stones which he had stolen. He had a great fondness for both jewellery and bullion, and I have read in a bourgeois newspaper an interview in which he proclaimed that the greatest ideal of his life was to lay his hands on the large official funds which were carried away from Russia during the White emigration.

Wrangel was promptly forgotten, and the organization of the Crimea was taken in hand in 1921. I refer those who desire complete and detailed documentation on the subject to the reports which the Executive Committee drew up in the month of May last year on the economic situation of the country. The present revenue of the Crimea is thirty-five million roubles — the figure is that or 1927. Out of these thirty-five millions seventeen millions have been expended locally, and the remaining eighteen millions turned over to the budget of the Soviet Union and of Russia proper. Of these latter eighteen millions ten

have been returned to the Crimea, in the form of funds for health and educational institutions and subsidies for industries of national importance. The budget estimates for salaries of representatives of the Central Committee in certain local administrative bodies are decreasing. On the other hand, estimates for social purposes—education, health, pensions—and credits for industry and public works are increasing.

Its natural advantages of sunshine and climate mark out the Crimea in the first place for the development of what one may call the industry of health. The healing virtues of the Crimea were already recognized under the Empire. Their enjoyment was chiefly the privilege of wealth and birth, which carved out fiefs there and constructed luxurious castles and villas. But even at that time there were in existence health establishments for the use of the staffs of a small number of industrial firms, and there were also some public sanatoriums; their charges, however, were high above the level of working-class resources. The workers were, in practice, entirely excluded from the benefits of the treatment which the aristocrats enjoyed.

To-day the methodical exploitation of the healthy and warm regions of the Union for the healing and repose of workers—an organization with which there is nothing at all comparable abroad—presents one of the most characteristic, and one of the most admirable, spectacles in the new Russia. Every sanatorium or home of rest has its special guests—Government workers, staffs of the Central Executive Committee, scientists, artists, peasants, members of industrial trusts, and so on.

These centres of relaxation and of healing are spread out along a strip of territory which borders the south coast of the peninsula. This marvellous ribbon of foliage, of rocks, of enchanting bays, of white palaces washed by the dark-blue waters, enjoys a temperature three or four degrees higher than the rest of the Crimea —what one may call the Northern Crimea. When you pass from the interior of the country to the coastal region through the gate of Baidarskie, you not only have an astonishing panorama, but you also feel an actual sudden breath of warm air on your face.

The old soil of the Crimea, still soaked in Turkish tradition, has been cultivated for centuries. Production has now regained, and in some items surpassed, its pre-war average. In Southern Crimea, apart from the industry of relaxation and health, the principal products are the grape and the tobacco plant. The immense curved coast and the valleys running down to it are chequered with patchworks of vineyards, green in summer, golden and russet in autumn, stippled with tobacco fields, and covered with sheds where the strings of tobacco leaves pale as they mature. This cultivation is mostly in the hands of Tatar and Greek peasants.

Wheat appears at some distance from the coast, and the 665,000 hectares under this crop are skilfully cultivated by Germans, Jews, and Tatars. If we take all agricultural products together, the area at present sown is ninety-eight per cent of the pre-war area. The Crimea has 80,000 horses and 20,000 pigs less than before the Revolution. On the other hand, it has 65,000 cattle and 100,000 sheep and goats more. The

Five Years' Plan has taken all necessary measures to increase the number of horses by one-half and double the number of pigs by 1932.

Agriculture in the Crimea is divided in the following proportions: State cultivation, 5·4 per cent; collective cultivation, 5 per cent; and private cultivation, 89·6 per cent. There are to-day 49 agricultural training centres, 500 experimental farms, 38 veterinary stations, and 24 centres for the distribution of machines and 35 for the distribution of seeds. All these establishments and organizations will be multiplied in the course of the next five years.

Thanks to the selection of seeds, and the use of mineral fertilizers and machines, productivity is now higher than it used to be—one-third in the case of wheat, one-fifth in the case of oats, and two-thirds in the case of maize. This productivity is being further increased to such a point that wheat, for example, will yield 11·4 quintals to the hectare, and the harvest will be worth fifty-six and a half million roubles. The proportion of the total agricultural production available for export should in 1932 be 64 per cent of the whole. The total production will then have increased by 95 per cent, and its value will be eighty-five million roubles.

Agriculture and industry interlock, and both are based upon the same motive power, in accordance with the Soviet principle of economy in energy. The output of electric energy in the Crimea is nineteen kilowatts per head per hour; by 1932 this figure will be increased to fifty-four. The factories working with electrical current will be augmented from forty-eight

to sixty-six, and the amount of energy they consume will be quadrupled.

The metal industry is centred in the city of Kertchi, where the surrounding sub-soil is rich in iron ore. There, as elsewhere, the great factories were ruined by the Revolution; but since the Revolution one or two new blast furnaces rise out of the earth every year. The output of the district of Kertchi is 54 million tons. In the same district 400,000 tons of sulphur are produced. The *Gosplan* and the Academy of Science are agreed in certifying that there are deposits of sulphur which will not be exhausted in the course of the next century. Other natural products are building stone, clay, plaster, chalk, bitumen, and salt. Industry and commerce in the Crimea consume a great deal of cement. This is not produced in the Crimea itself, but Novorossisk, close by, provides a cement comparable with that of Boulogne, and sixteen million *bochkas* of this excellent product are sold every year.

The number of industrial workers in the Crimea, so I was assured by a local authority, is 20,000. In the course of five years the number of workers will be increased by 69 per cent, and the working capital available by 168 per cent. Under the Empire private enterprise, the only form which existed in the Crimea, dragged by the halter two to three thousand workers at most. The proportion of private industry to the whole was reduced by 1927 to 24 per cent. By 1932 it will be reduced to 12 per cent, and in the case of heavy industry will be completely abolished.

There is coal in the Crimea, but its exploitation has

not advanced beyond the stage of making borings and driving experimental pits. In 1927 the State chemical industries had reached a production of 993,000 roubles, the State tanneries 2,529,000 roubles, the packing industry 3,856,000, and the flour mills 7,358,000. These figures, as the result of the investment of a working capital of 108 million roubles, should be almost doubled by 1932, and in the case of the packing industry tripled. The production of the State metal industry in the Crimea will by that date reach twenty-six and a half millions.

The wine trusts in the Crimea do a large business. Maxim Gorki, since his recent stay in the peninsula, has drawn attention to the fact that very few people realize the importance of the sale of Crimean wines abroad—half a million *vedros*, according to his figures. The trusts which control export make an annual income of about four million roubles.

The question of transport was deplorably neglected during the period of the Tsars. The historians swear to high Heaven that Nicholas I had all sorts of projects for the development of roads and means of communication, but for unknown reasons he did not carry into execution a single one of them. The total length of railways in the Crimea is at present 570 kilometres —an altogether insufficient figure in view of the clamorous demands of industry and the steady extension of the network of sanatoriums and homes of rest.

An exact and practical scheme to meet this situation has been elaborated under the Five Years' Plan. Sevastopol and Yalta will be linked by a tramway line, and Yalta will be joined to Simferopol by railway.

The mapping of these routes is already finished, and construction will shortly be put in hand, at a cost of twenty million roubles. Other lines, 230 kilometres in length, will extend the total length of the Crimean railways to eight hundred kilometres.

One-sixth of the roads of the Crimea are already tarred, and the road from Sevastopol to Alouchta will stand comparison, in breadth and surface, with the famous *Corniche d'Or* along the Mediterranean. All the roads of the Crimea, or at least the 644 kilometres of State highways, will be completely tarred three years hence. I must not forget to single out for mention the reinforced concrete promenade, costing 60,000 roubles, which runs along the water-front of Yalta. Apart from entirely new roads—such as that seventy kilometres long which will unite Sevastopol to Simferopol—means of communication are being extended and improved in all directions. 100,000 roubles have already been spent on the roads in the district of Yalta, and 450,000 on those of the whole of the Crimea. Work has been put in hand, at a cost of 12 million roubles, for increasing the number of State highways by one-half and doubling the number of local roads.

Traffic in the Black Sea, which had to be completely reorganized, is being actively extended. Hardly a day passes when all the ports of call between Odessa and Batoum are not visited by a steamer carrying passengers and merchandise. Four new steamers have been commissioned at Odessa—two for the route Odessa–Batoum, and two more for the route Simiis–Yalta.

The problem of irrigation is one of capital importance in the development of the country, which suffers from a severe shortage of water during the summer. Two examples will serve to illustrate this deficiency. The level of the Aiana varies only from ·023 to 18 centimetres, and that of another water-course, the Skelia, from ·025 to 26! Every year 150,000 to 200,000 roubles are being devoted to catchment schemes, the construction of reinforced concrete reservoirs, and the cutting of canals.

The Five Years' Plan, rigid in its demands, contemplates the modernization of the cities of Yalta and Sevastopol, and the improvement of these and three other Crimean ports: Feodocia, Kertchi, and Evpatorisk. Eighty thousand roubles will be spent this year merely upon preliminary surveying.

The history of the Crimea has had added to it during the past year a terrible page—the earthquake. For three months, beginning in September and continuing almost without interruption, the ground, in the picturesque phrase which a peasant employed in speaking to me, "rocked like a cradle." Trees and houses great and small swayed like ships at sea. The smaller houses collapsed, and their white debris was scattered over the gardens and roads. The larger houses split from top to bottom, and avalanches of rock crashed down the mountain sides. At one moment the sea suddenly retreated, leaving bathers stranded on its bed.

It is impossible to convey the horror of this earth tremor which went on for nearly a hundred days, destroying whole regions and villages of stone and

wood. All those who lived through it are haunted by a memory of terror, and one can still see almost everywhere, especially in the case of older houses and humbler dwellings, gaping, disorderly evidences of the blows of that flail of Nature.

Yet already almost everything has been reconstructed, restored, repaired, replaced. The material damage was estimated at thirty million roubles. Moscow contributed in 1927 seven million roubles. This year its contribution will amount to four millions more. These sums have been entirely devoted to the rebuilding of houses. They are constructed wherever possible of reinforced concrete, which resists better than stone when the earth shrugs its shoulders.

Two hundred and fifty new houses have been built for two hundred and fifty families of poor peasants, consisting of two rooms and a lobby. Independently of the seven millions contributed by the Government of the U.S.S.R., there has been an expenditure of ten to eleven millions for public works, and especially the rebuilding of homes of rest: 120,000 roubles for Sououk Sou, 20,000 for Moukhalatka, 50,000 for Livadia, 200,000 for Dulberg, formerly the property of the Tsar's brother.

The heavy expenditure which the earthquake unexpectedly involved was responsible for a slight decrease in the number of persons treated in the homes of rest and sanatoriums of the Crimea during the year. In Yalta and its neighbourhood 350,000 ill and ailing were received, as compared with 400,000 during the year before. The development of the immense health network of the Crimea, however, continued methodi-

cally in this as in other years. At Yalta a general clinic, of an especially perfected type, of which only two other examples exist throughout the Union, has been constructed. This establishment, which will remain open even during the winter, and can accommodate three hundred people, cost 200,000 roubles.

I have already spoken of Artek, that paradise of school children whose health has failed. At Simiis there is another great State sanatorium, and in the same neighbourhood one belonging to the Ukraine. At Moukhalatka is the sanatorium for members of the Government services. At Alouchta, where there are six kilometres of beach, is the home of rest for the Union of Trusts, accommodating 4000. At Evpatorisk there is a completely new mud-bath establishment, which cost a million roubles.

A general clinic, and also a sanatorium for tuberculosis, which had been projected for fifteen years, have been constructed, at a cost of two and a half million roubles, at Dalazi, in a high situation six kilometres from Yalta. The buildings, finished in June, have a hundred and fifty beds, with separate rooms for every patient, solariums, and so on. This year, at a cost of a million and a half roubles, little summer-houses are being constructed in addition. This establishment was financed by the Insurance Office, which has in the Crimea six sanatoriums and homes of rest. There are also in the Crimea State homes of rest, which make a charge of 130 to 150 roubles a month.

In spite of the increase in the industrial population since the Revolution, the worker is generally, by

comparison with the rest of the Union, well paid. One of the engineers who is most actively engaged in the industrial reconstruction of the Crimea informed me that building workers make from 5 to 6 roubles, and sometimes 8, a day. (The rouble is worth 13 francs.) In the metal industry apprentices make from 40 to 50 roubles a month, learners from 70 to 80, and fully qualified workers from 150 to 200. For the whole Crimea the average monthly wages are: heavy industry, 65; smaller industries, 58; clerks, 67; builders, 73; transport workers, 50; farm labourers, 36; teachers and artists, 58; staffs of the health services, 45; road workers and postmen, 64. One of the objects of the Five Years' Plan is to raise the average of wages by 20 per cent. If the decrease in the cost of living is taken into account the actual increase will be 46 per cent. On the protection of labour 452,000 roubles are being spent. The co-operative movement, which is somewhat stagnant, is being vigorously promoted.

Eleven new schools have been established. Instruction is given in three languages—Tatar, Greek, and Russian. Any visitor to the towns and villages of the Crimea to-day can witness for himself how much the change to the Latin alphabet has done for fostering the Turkish language. I am told that this ingenious adaptation of the Latin script enables one to learn Turkish in three years.

What of the political atmosphere? Before the war the Crimea had a small Communist nucleus. This was greatly reinforced and strengthened during the course of Wrangel's ill-conceived intervention. Indomitable revolutionaries took to the mountains and

harassed Wrangel, who could do nothing to strike at these guerrilla fighters in return. After the devastating famine which raged in 1921 the help of Moscow was warmly welcomed by the unfortunate inhabitants of the Crimea. To-day the majority consider that the Soviet system is in the best interests of their country.

Among the Tatar population there is a proportion of five per cent of Communists in the towns and two per cent in the villages. There are seven women presidents of Tatar village committees. In the little Turkish houses with their two rooms—reception room and living room—generally with no furniture except carpets, new customs are beginning to replace the old as confident youth goes its triumphant way. Some old people still keep religious superstition firmly embedded under their Astrakhan caps. But it is disappearing by force of circumstances, as all nightmares vanish in the daylight. The earthquake destroyed a number of mosques. They remain in ruins, for the State provided no funds to re-house the outworn creed. That is in accordance with historical destiny. In such ways, little by little, the mass of humanity, in spite of itself, finds its way back all along the line to its true path.

That is all I have to say here about the beautiful, vivid Crimea. I owe much to it because it gave me back my health, and also because I fell passionately in love with its impressive landscapes set between sea and sun. But I think that I should have been lacking in respect to this or any other region of the Soviet Union if I had failed to record, at the same time as its

light and life, those data which make it the stage of a social renewal unique in history. If I had neglected its triumphant statistics I should not be doing my duty by it to the workers and the intellectual revolutionaries of the West.

VIII

SCENES IN THE EARTHLY PARADISE

I LEFT Abkhasia like a man awakening from a dream. In the month of January the snow-bound Odessa to which I had come displayed its stateliness of outline by land and sea in icy severity. There skies had been resplendent and the sun scorching. The SS. *Ilich*, which brought me from Gagri to Odessa, had transported me from summer to winter in three days.

The Crimea is luminous and dry, but cold in winter. Abkhasia is luminous and moist, but, even when it pours with rain, it is warm in winter. Its soil is deep and black, fertile and prolific in tropical vegetation, which grows there more luxuriantly than in the tropics themselves. One might describe it as a botanical garden set in splendid mountains. I shall never forget its gorges and its vast rocky peaks losing themselves in the clouds. The road from Soukhoum to Teberda rivals that excellent and justly famous military road which crosses the middle of the Caucasus from Vladikavkas to Tiflis.

The coast of Abkhasia strikes one as super-European and almost as supernatural. Nature seems to have laid down on these slopes bordering the eastern Black Sea an immense, overheated conservatory. In this country which during the rainy season is plunged in a warm bath, and upon which the sun of summer

afterwards beats as fiercely as a searchlight, all sorts of exotic trees indulge themselves to their hearts' content and grow to fantastic dimensions.

One sees banana trees whose long, curved green leaves are wider than a man's shoulders, and which have a spine stronger than a man's backbone. They are astonishingly prolific. Their strange, viscera-like flowers hang in great bunches, supported by a sort of vegetable spring-buffer, and there are even second crops of fruit, though these, it is true, are still-born. There are phœnix-palm trees—the classic palms—some of whose tall trunks are thick as those columns on which theatrical advertisements are displayed in our French towns, crowned with a great bouquet of pointed fans. Then there are camel-palms, whose scaly trunks are covered with a rough hair. Before I heard that they were known as camel-palms I called them bear-palms.

Along the roads and in the parks dracænas raise their bundle of thin, diverging stems, each ending in a shaggy cluster. These are the palms which convey most strongly a romantic impression of the Orient, so that one almost expects to find beside them a strip of desert, a Bedouin, and a mosque. At Soukhoum I entered a palm grove where a thick shade was cast by these great green fronds, which we are used to seeing singly in conservatories or in tubs in houses. And on leaving it I found myself in an alley of giant castor-oil trees, which would have made a good setting for a film of *Uncle Tom* or *Paul and Virginia.*

Tramping the quays of the port of Odessa paved with great square blocks now covered with a thick

quilting of snow, with a wind lashing into my face the cold of 10° C. below zero, I recalled among my impressions of the past month the amazing poplars of Gagri. There is a row of them on the shore a few steps from the landing-place, monstrous columns of bark, like wooden clock towers so wide that four or five men could not join hands around their base, and soaring to a height of forty metres.

I thought also of those oaks which grow about the old towers of Novi Afon. They have knocked down these age-old walls, pierced them and crumbled them, and they hold in their tentacle-like roots sculptured stones which tell their own ages, like epitaphs of men still living. There is a whole cluster of these remarkable giants on the wooded crest, between the two ruined towers which mark the summit of the mountain. Elsewhere there are cork oaks with their pachydermatous hides swollen to an enormous size which is altogether exceptional in this family of trees.

Shoots of plants of the same species have been transplanted to Soukhoum from various places, and it has been proved that these plants have much more vitality and vigour of growth in the soil of Soukhoum than in Sicily, Algeria, or Madeira. In one of the parks, to which I was conducted by Comrade Smidovitch of the *presidium* of the Central Committee of the U.S.S.R., who spends his holidays there, there were eucalyptus trees which in thirty years have reached a stage of development which they take fifty years to reach in Australia, their country of origin.

All sorts of experiments have been made in this fairyland of vegetation—with plants that yield perfume,

palms that yield thread, mimosas whose bark yields tannin, a product for which the U.S.S.R. has hitherto had to depend upon importation from abroad. A plant has even been cultivated, experimentally, which bears a very beautiful red fruit; this, however, has finally had to be recognized as being of no use for any purpose whatever. It is not eatable even for animals, and it has neither perfume nor oil. Its lovely fruit—like a shining tomato, perfectly round and of a vivid scarlet—is even useless for ornamentation on account of its extreme fragility. So that is that; and it will not be cultivated any more.

Whether the melon tree—the carica—will yield any better results is not yet known, since the melon-like fruit which grows on its stout branches will not ripen for the first time until some months hence. The yew—which is called the red wood—is cultivated for house furnishing purposes, and so is the *chunchit*, from which also are manufactured heavy, tough staves, and the small plates used by the peasants for helping themselves out of the central dish. These plates serve for generations without wearing out.

Such are some of the concrete advantages which result from a temperature that varies throughout the year from 15° C. in winter to 40° C. in summer. The peasants tell you also that in Abkhasia fowls lay all the year round. For these and other reasons Abkhasia has been called Absn, which means Paradise, by its inhabitants. I shall keep in my mind's eye for ever the dazzlement of those three successive bays of Gagri, Novi Afon, and Soukhoum. I have already, in speaking of these regions, called them the most

beautiful country in the world. I am not afraid to repeat this bold, succinct, and perhaps rather childish affirmation.

Gagri was the fief of the Prince of Oldenburg, uncle of the Tsar Nicholas II. I had read earlier that this great personage's purchase for some thousand roubles of an estate which was worth several millions created some scandal even in the time of the Tsar. It is fair to add that the Prince of Oldenburg spent eighteen million roubles on developing the park and on planting rare and magic species all around the mountainous slopes of the bay which runs down to the sea. But it is even fairer to add that the workers whom he employed on this immense task were not paid anything beyond their keep. It was a time of famine, and the Prince was quick to exploit their misfortune.

There is no longer a Prince at Gagri. There is nothing left of him but his carriage, something like a stage coach painted yellow and blue, which has been preserved as a somewhat ridiculous relic of vanity on the turntable where it formerly manœuvred so despotically. There is no longer a Prince, but there is still the princely park which for several kilometres follows the coast beyond old Gagri, with its poplars and plantains, palms and cypresses, weeping willows and magnolias.

There remain also the vast buildings which the presence of this encumbering potentate made necessary for the accommodation of his chamberlains and his stewards, his suite and his servants. This group of buildings, which constitute a sort of overgrown hotel or pleasure city, are not always in the best of taste.

There are unpleasant traces of the "modern" style and the contours of 1907. But as a whole they give an impression of dignity and majesty — even that wooden house, a little too elaborately carved, which His Highness had transported *en bloc* from the Fair of Nijni Novgorod.

The curve of the coast beyond the park towards new Gagri has the grace of fairy-land. It is bordered with palms standing out against the blue sky, with cypresses, and with all kinds of trees and climbing plants which sometimes cover and clothe the whole slopes from top to bottom. One might imagine that one was on some sunlit coast of Tunisia or Sicily, were it not for the passers-by on foot and on horseback, whose appearance is a reminder of a different part of the world.

The horsemen, sometimes soldiers, but mostly peasants, are particularly fascinating. They wear the immense, hairy black felt *bourka*, which stands out wide and stiff at the shoulders, giving a majestic appearance to the man inside it, and falls over the horse's crupper. They have turbans of grey or brown worsted, with the ends either falling over their ears or sticking out in wings to right and left of their heads. Others wear the flat, round Astrakhan cap.

One meets also women on horseback, riding side-saddle in the case of girls, and astride in the case of married women. Carts pass drawn by mild-eyed oxen. These enormous ruminants, with their great, grooved horns lying back along their skulls, are the best-tempered beasts in the world. Near the outskirts of towns, such as Soukhoum or Goudaouti, there is a regular procession of carts, over which motor-cars

shed dust or mud—according to the time of year—and panic.

On the great road which follows the sea coast from one end of Abkhasia to the other one encounters horses carrying timber—sixty kilos on either side—a few carriages and motors, and droves of pedestrians: mostly peasants wearing the *bachlik* (turban) or the little black or white felt cap, and an occasional ex-monk, recognizable by the equivocal tufts on his chin and cheeks, and by his long, dirty hair, knotted at the back with a shoe-lace. Honest peasants on their way home carry a stick across their shoulders, with the remains of their meal stuck on the end of it: bits of meat and cheese, and rounds of bread, which they had no intention of leaving behind on the restaurant table. Some are old, almost centenarians, but not all of these are ensconced like ikons in their *bourkas*; and some are superb in their clean-cut youth.

These people speak one of three tongues—Abkhasian, Georgian, or Russian. Every shop or rest-house or cross-roads inn has notices in one of these three languages. This general use of three local languages dates only from the Soviet regime, of which it is the most conspicuous outward and visible sign. From this regime dates also the existence of written Abkhasian. Until this time the language was only handed down orally, like old popular legends. It existed, so to speak, only in the sphere of sound, not in the geometry of signs. The Soviet power took it captive and imprisoned it in an alphabet. This, on account of the extreme fluidity of spoken Abkhasian, was no easy matter. It was discovered that the language had

seventy-eight different sounds. A reduction of this number was taken in hand, but the utmost compression still left sixty-two.

Few languages present such richness of modulation. With such a collection of classified sounds one can almost imitate the song of birds or the collective rustling of leaves. One of the sounds of the language is a pure whistle; you cannot pronounce it perfectly without whistling. This prodigious series of sounds has been reproduced with the help of the Latin alphabet, but when its resources were exhausted supplementary signs had to be borrowed from the Russian alphabet, and it was even necessary to invent some new ones. I should add that a whole younger generation of prose writers and poets is now occupied with giving the old Abkhasian language, for the first time, a written literature.

Beyond Gagri there is another great and impressive curve in the coast: Novi Afon. One sees it first—if one comes overland from Gagri—from the top of a country of passes and valleys bounded in the far distance by the snow-capped Caucasus. Striking and unforgettable is the impression of the monastery built by Greek monks who came from old Afon a hundred and fifty years ago. On the great hill which shelves down towards the sea is set a primitive fresco. The picture is subdivided by the geometrical alignment of trees in the enormous park. Rows of giant cypresses make up a quadrilateral of tall, black lines. Within this the white of the buildings shows through symmetrical arrangements of silver-grey olives; oaks and firs with their classic canopies;

and orchards picked out with mandarines like little lighted lanterns.

When you enter this estate you experience a feeling of peaceful grandeur, but this quickly changes into disquiet at nightfall, when the immense walls of the rows of cypresses rise on either hand, like the sides of a sombre way of death. In spite of the Revolution, in spite of the Republic, in spite of Liberty, the rigid, implacable mould of monastic life is everywhere visible, and you feel all the weight of Christianity bearing down upon your back.

On this estate lived one thousand monks, of whom fifty exploited the others. So I was ingenuously told one fine but melancholy evening by an ex-monk who sold newspapers on the old paved cross-road, in the shadow of the great army of sombre cypresses. "There were the ordinary monks who worked all the time. A little higher were the better-educated monks, who wrote, and above them those who directed. Then, highest of all, in the house called the Swallow's Nest, on the upper slopes of the mountain, came the bishop, who did nothing."

To-day the house of the directing monks is converted into a Home of Rest—kept, as a matter of fact, by a former monk. When I was there this house was closed, but a swarm of workers, men and women, were occupied in the picking and packing of the oranges on the estate. Half a million are sent to Moscow, Kharkov, and Kiev. Among the workers, navvies, and gardeners, who looked after the park, were some former monks, recognizable by their mawkish air and some indelible stamp of monasticism. Other monks, who

are not, as they formerly were, compelled to work, prefer to do nothing, and tramp the roads in rags, begging their bread. A hotel has been established in the monastery itself. The vast refectory, exactly like a church with its frescoed nave, has been turned into a restaurant. Just under the pulpit where a brother read the Bible during meals stands a piano, on which I heard somebody playing plaintive local airs.

Instead of congealing as formerly under the influence, direct or indirect, of monastic rules, every one is now seeking living rules appropriate to the new life. For example, vines are being planted instead of maize, the only crop here since time immemorial. I was also told by a herd, who was looking after a drove of superb beasts on the pastures of the former monastery, that good new strains had been introduced to improve the local stock, which had been small and puny.

Twenty kilometres away, on another great amphitheatre at whose foot also lies the wide arc of a sunny, blue-black sea, are congregated the houses, the trees, and the twenty thousand people of Soukhoum. Above the town is the palace of the monkeys, and I must speak first of these four-handed ancestors. The institution in question was founded two years ago. It is directed by Professors Forsivik (of the Institute of the Mind) and Voscresienski, assisted by Doctor Toboldine. It houses forty-two monkeys. Nothing like it has ever been seen in the world. The Germans tried to assemble and tame monkeys in the island of Teneriffe, but they only succeeded in getting together eight, which did not reproduce themselves. Nothing

has been achieved, either, in America, in spite of several attempts. It is as yet too early to draw conclusions from the recent experiments at Cagnes, in the south of France.

Recently two new lodgers have been born in the house of the monkeys at Soukhoum. One is five weeks old, and the other five months. The first will not leave his mother, who for that matter would not let him. When we arrived in front of the cage in which they live, the mother seized her son in her arms, pressed him to her breast, and retreated to the other end of her apartment, still tightly clutching her child, who clung to her with both hands. This family, with fine little faces and quick, bright, extremely intelligent eyes, is a family of mandrils. They look at you steadily, with a glance sharp and penetrating as a sword, and, when they get to know you, they are quite ready to extend their tiny black hands to you.

The mandril who was born at Soukhoum five months ago is very well developed. This small black baby is already a consummate gymnast. If a metronome is set tick-tacking in front of his cage, he stops whatever he may be doing and hurries forward. He has learned to associate this noise with the gift of a grape. A few minutes later I was present at a stormy, melodramatic scene, staged by two young mandrils in a towering rage, showing their teeth and threatening to hurl themselves upon one another at any moment. They are separated by bars, but they could still scratch and bruise each other. This is a source of constant anxiety to the mother of the baby, whom she seizes in her arms every time he is taken with a fit of fury against the

other, and holds as tight as she can, screaming at the top of her voice.

In another cage, kept at a steady temperature of 20° C., are five chimpanzees. These, with their faces flat as a leather sole, fringed with bristling hair stiff as a fan, have a much more alarming appearance. The two greenish-yellow marbles, set very close together in the middle of their faces, which are their eyes, have a curious light, mysterious and rather disconcerting. These chimpanzees, which are of great size, readily obey the voice of the professor, but otherwise they are not very amenable, notably Tarzan, who is twenty years old. He seizes hold of the bars and hangs there motionless, but he has a habit of raising a priestly hand in the air and clenching his fist whenever he sees a strange biped. It is fair to say that these chimpanzees had a reason for not being in the best of tempers: the only food they like is bananas, and at the moment there were no bananas for them.

There are three orang-outangs, the most intelligent and the most "brother-like" of all monkeys. I had the pleasure of holding in my arms Bobby, aged three, and he shook my hand with his own long-fingered little hand in friendly fashion when I left. An open-air park of two and a half hectares is in course of construction for these humble citizens. Comrade Rykov, delighted and impressed with what he saw during his visit, has arranged a grant of five hundred tons of cement, and the Insurance Office has provided 40,000 roubles.

What is the object of bringing up these monkeys, who

demand the whole-time services of eminent scientists, and whose upkeep is decidedly expensive—for the sub-human lodgers of Soukhoum live on an exclusive diet of fresh eggs and bananas? The scientific interest of this enterprise is considerable. Further information of great value about human biology is expected to result from it. The monkeys are there to be the subjects of observation and experiment, in the first place from the point of view of psychological life, since in their inferior organisms (not so much inferior, but let that pass) it is easier to detect primitive reactions and basic laws governing the functioning of the nerves and nerve centres.

In the next place, human medicine can very usefully check its current ideas by the comparative study of animals, in the case of some if not all ailments. By this means, for example, Professor Voscresienski has been able, thanks to his mandrils, to make a most informative comparison between malaria and certain ailments which are due to internal worms—illnesses which present the same symptoms as malaria, but are in fact radically different. At present the whole enterprise is only in the stage of preliminary observation and of accustoming the monkeys to their surroundings.

Impressive, exquisite Abkhasia, whose details of picturesqueness and attractiveness one might go on describing indefinitely, has been in its latter period of history a very unhappy earthly paradise. It counted formerly many more inhabitants than it has to-day. There are still two hundred thousand Abkhasians scattered over various parts of the Soviet Union, and especially over Turkey, as a result of the emigration

to which misery and war gave rise. In the Republic of Abkhasia itself there are now about seventy thousand people, all of whom can remember the ill-treatment to which, after the Empire, they were subjected by the Menshevik regime.

In the five provinces of Abkhasia there are two hundred schools with some twenty-five thousand pupils. There were only seven thousand pupils under the Tsars, and the same number under the Mensheviks. The present schools are proportioned to the different populations—Abkhasian, Georgian, Greek, Russian, and Armenian.

Agriculturally Abkhasia is the tobacco field of Transcaucasia, or at least a very large part of so-called Georgian tobacco is produced in the little Abkhasian Republic. Its output is six hundred thousand *pouds* of leaves—the same quantity as before the war. It should be mentioned that during the Menshevik domination the production of tobacco in Abkhasia sank to zero. A great intensive effort is being put forth in its production, and the prospects in this direction are bright.

With the cultivation of tobacco Abkhasia combines that of maize. One can hardly traverse the magic valleys of this country anywhere to-day without seeing between the rocks and the forests, wherever there is clear ground, the speckles of the tobacco plant and giant ears of maize sticking out of the tall grass. After the harvest almost every tree is swathed in maize stacked around it to dry. The traditional basis of Abkhasian peasant cuisine is cakes and paste made out of maize flour. To-day enclaves of vines, *lioufa*, and

tea are beginning to appear among the maize fields. Within two years, from 1926 to 1928, the area of tea plantations in Abkhasia increased tenfold, from thirty deciatines to three hundred.

Although it is forbidden to deforest the mountains to an extent which would affect the aspect of the coast-line, the wood industry is making great progress in Abkhasia. Its chief line of development is the export of timber for cabinet-making to Egypt and Italy. Ten versts of rack-and-pinion apparatus have been installed to transport the felled trees from the top to the bottom of the mountains. The installation is expensive, costing forty thousand roubles the verst.

Need I say that the incomparable climate has made Abkhasia a specially favoured centre for houses of rest and sanatoriums? All the homes which the great ones of the earth formerly had built for themselves under this extraordinary sky are now devoted to the repose and the healing of the workers of the Soviet Union, from the great palace of the Prince of Oldenburg at Gagri to the private houses beautifully sited in the best positions, in the time of injustice, by social parasites of importance. New sanatoriums have been built or organized. Others have been brought to the highest pitch of perfection, like that of Goulerichp, which claims the title of the first sanatorium in the Soviet Union. It shelters three hundred cases of tuberculosis in the first or second stages of the disease, and is situated in a wonderful setting of mountains and forests, commanding a marvellous view of the sea.

This sanatorium was built before the Revolution by a very rich timber merchant named Smeskoi. When

the Revolution broke out this old man did not, like so many others, seek refuge in the West. He stayed where he was, and he still lives in a little house of which he has been granted the use, and receives a pension from the Soviet Government. Similarly at Gagri Doctor Fedorov has been left in the enjoyment of his very beautiful house, in recognition of the real devotion which he showed to the proletariat.

Formerly the Abkhasians were all Moslems. One might say that to-day they are divided into Moslem and Christian, but this would hardly be correct. In reality the antagonism of Cross and Crescent has had the result that the majority of the population are disgusted with both and have lost interest in either. In spite of some old habits of formulæ and beads, which still persist here and there, the credit of both "pope" and *mullah* is declining, and they have not even the satisfaction left of being able to console each other.

The little republic, sister of the Georgian Republic, has plenty of other things to occupy it. The same sufferings, the same massacres, and the same miseries, resulting from nationalistic wars, Tsarist oppression, and the barbarous exploitation of the workers, awakened in it the same aspirations as in the whole U.S.S.R. A new breath of life has been inhaled by this brave people, who see more clearly from day to day the great paths of progress which have opened for them since 1921—since the time, that is to say, when Abkhasia became a Peasants' and Workers' State, forming an integral part of the Soviet Continent. Formerly the Abkhasian worker was nobody; now he is

a part of a great whole, on a footing of equality with any other citizen of that whole. Comrade Smidovitch explained this very simply and clearly to the delegates of the party conference at Soukhoum one evening when we went to speak there.

The Soviet spirit makes steady progress among the peasants. One day, passing through the town of Tsebelda, I saw an enormous crowd; they were poor workers who had come from all parts of the mountains, some of them with a great deal of trouble, in response to an invitation from the Government to a conference at which the demands of the poor peasants might be discussed with the authorities. In other places I had long talks with officials of the party and the Government, not to speak of important personalities of the republic like Lakoba, Tchamba, Gueguella, etc. In all of them I found a fighting spirit and an excellent appreciation of the practical work immediately ahead. In the masses there grows steadily a fervent desire to understand, to be instructed, and to act.

There is still much to be done. The plan of action, economic, social, and political, outlined by our eminent comrade Orgenikidze to Lakoba, Amas, and the rest of us during the New Year's Day we all spent together calls for plenty of energy and hard work. Its object is that this beautiful land of Abkhasia, which, for all its beauty, has been so unfortunate, so persecuted, so abandoned, and so neglected for centuries by progress and culture, should finally achieve through a rational human formula the due development and the harmonious health of a collective body.

IX

THE MAN OF ARTEK

It was not very long—only a few days, and it seems to me as if it had been yesterday; and still pain clutches at my heart when I think of it. I had been to Artek, as I very often did when I was staying at Sououk-Sou. I shook his hand and we talked together in friendly fashion, as good Communist comrades should.

Artek is a little village of spacious, symmetrical houses, which the will of one man called into being on the edge of the sea in one of the most exquisite and impressive corners of the Crimean coast. On a door-post of one of the houses you may still read his name —Soloviev. The village which he summoned out of the ground is a village of children. The place is famous all over the world, but, even if you had never heard of it before, you would realize what it is as soon as you passed the entrance gate. The road which runs down towards the neat rows of houses bears the marks of thousand of little, bare feet, and it is very obvious that you are approaching a children's Paradise.

Children live in all these houses, which have only during the past year replaced the tents that formerly sheltered them. Not only are there roomy, well-planned houses with a regular army of beds, but also an infirmary, shower baths, and a museum, rich in trophies, botanical, mineral, and animal, collected

by the children themselves. Inside this museum, with its walls covered with notices, you see all kinds of living things—enormous beetles, hedgehogs, and snakes, and even a fine specimen of the Crimean eagle, blue-eyed and vulture-necked; this last, however, is stuffed.

Every month, for five months in the year, two hundred children in successive batches arrive in Artek. In the course of the year one thousand children pass through—children drawn from every part of the immense Union, but especially from the coldest regions and the poorest homes, who come here to bathe in the glorious sunshine of the Crimea, with its magic sea on one side and on the other the wild, luxuriant park which climbs the slopes of the mountains and extends along the coast to the massive flanks of the mountain of the Bear.

Such was the object which inspired the creation of Artek—the restoration of health to a thousand little school children, weakened as a result of life in cities of fog and homes of poverty by transporting them to this favoured spot, which in earlier days was developed with loving care by a merchant who made a fortune out of the wine business. The beginning of every month witnesses the arrival of a happy band of children under-nourished, stunted, and asphyxiated by the hard life and the unhealthy atmosphere of the cities. School discipline is maintained while they take the cure, and this suffices to keep order and prevent any disturbance among these hundred boys and hundred girls of ten to fourteen years old.

They eat and sleep, they drink in the pure air and the sunshine, they go for walks. (I have met them

many a time out in the depths of the country, marching behind their banners and to the sound of the drum; and when I met them on the roads we always greeted one another, for we were very good friends.) They play all kinds of games in the great park, especially a new game, "Find Nobile"; and they go on scientific excursions in charge of the good Doctor Chechmariov and the young woman teacher of botany.

At the end of every month the little *smala*, chock-full of health and regrets, leave the oasis of Artek and disperse to the four corners of the Soviet Continent. The last contingent left three weeks ago, at the end of October, when the season closes. The occasion was celebrated by a fête, and a firework show, and all the people from round about Artek flocked in, drawn by the illuminations and the part-singing, the drums and the fifes of the school-children.

Even then Death was drawing near to this haunt of peace. At the end of the smiling rows of wooden houses there is a little house right at the water's edge. In the single room of this old cottage lived Soloviev, the father of Artek, its founder and its soul. Soloviev had done many other things in his life besides establishing the children's camp at Artek. As scientist and as fighter he had played his part in the early history of the giant Union of Soviet Republics. He had planned to do much more, and there seemed no reason why he should not. A tall, strong, good-looking man, he gave every promise of being able to continue his career of service for the common good.

Soloviev himself showed me round every corner of this colony of Artek, which Doctor Chechmariov had

assisted him to get into working order. He was accompanied by his clear-eyed, soft-voiced wife, who watched over him with tyrannical care; for already the symptoms of the terrible disease of the arteries from which he suffered had made their appearance. He pointed out to me the site, which he had chosen long before, where he contemplated building a children's sanatorium to be open all the year round.

He thought only of healing others, and, like all whose tenderness of soul makes them care for children and the suffering, he looked towards the future. But already he was himself suffering more than any of those about whom he thought, and he carried with him the fear that at any moment—and perhaps in a terrible way—he would be cut off in the middle of his task. He was a doctor, and, even while people congratulated him on his robust appearance, he knew the truth. "I am very ill," he had told me at Ouskoie as early as the month of July.

He realized the frightful ravages of those attacks which deprived him sometimes of voice, sometimes of sight, sometimes of memory, and gave him no respite until they finally struck down this man whose fine physique was matched by the nobility of mind which showed itself in his face. Yesterday I received a telegram to tell me that he was dead. I mourn him as I loved him; and there will be many others to mourn him too. But sorrow is tempered by the memory of an inspiring example of wisdom, of courage, and of labour—an example as enduring as the dreams he made come true.

X

PROLETARIAN LITERATURE

THERE has been a great deal of discussion about it, and so there ought to be. By all means let us comprehend it; but first we must know exactly what it is, and have precise and definite ideas about it. So far we are still at the stage of making clearances and taking soundings, of prospecting and probing.

By way of beginning at the beginning, let us try to frame a definition of proletarian literature. Up to the present there has been little more than groping around such a definition. Proletarian literature is, of course, revolutionary literature—the literature which, in order to describe, enlighten, and inspire it, adapts itself to the new society which is in active organization in the U.S.S.R., and in latent formation in the capitalist societies which still live under the old regime. We may say, if you like, that proletarian literature is the existing form, the living form, dictated, shaped, and sharpened by historical evolution, of what we used to call popular literature.

But, as soon as we seek to come to closer quarters with this somewhat sketchy generalization, an immediate difficulty arises. A literary movement is represented as a rule by a cycle of works. In this case, however, we are dealing with something of which, though it is everywhere in evidence, we see premonitory

symptoms rather than accomplished facts. Its actual productions which can arrest our attention are few, and they bear the marks of immaturity. It is obvious that this artistic effervescence will not attain its normal development and assume exact proportions until after the new society from which it emanates is completely established, and has been so established for a considerable period.

At the same time its trial runs are being made, and its concrete beginnings actually do exist. An outline of its production is sketched in fragmentary essays in various parts of the world, though in countries other than Russia, and even in certain parts of the Workers' State itself, it does no more than peep out of the ground. It is still in its period of struggle, as the world itself, with its ups and downs, its stops and starts, its surges and stagnations, is in a state of revolutionary disorder.

It is difficult, therefore, to define a creative effort which belongs more to the future than the present, especially in this artistic field where the very elements of the great works around which the rest will gravitate cannot as yet be foreseen. For this reason all those who have realized the coming and the preliminary effects of this vast movement still half imprisoned, who have garnered its somewhat confused initial manifestations and surveyed its present stage of development, have not as yet been able to define and classify this force which, though it belongs to the intellectual order, is nevertheless comparable to an unchained force of Nature.

I confess that I am not myself familiar with all the

discussion which has raged around the subject. I merely search in my turn, among the few landmarks of the present and the virgin perspectives of the future, for some positive bases of judgment.

The Revolution called into being a new man: the citizen of the Republic of Workers—factory workers, field workers, intellectual workers. This new man is at the same time a fighter who has to swim against the current, to clear away the rubbish-heaps of history, and to construct a social monument, whose design and materials are in his hands. He is completely a creation of the Revolution—in his will, in his intelligence, in his sensibility, in his morality. Proletarian literature has to do with this worker-soldier. It has to interpret his form, his doings and his feelings, his outward manifestations and his inward conflicts, his aspirations and, finally, his achievements.

But he is himself a cog in a wheel. He exists primarily as the cell of an organism, as a part of a whole, which is the international multitude. The outstanding mark of this new man is, therefore, his escape from the cloister of the individual and his social aspect. This does not at all imply a sacrifice, still less an annihilation, of personality. On the contrary, in the revolutionary fatherland, the Socialist fatherland, personality is exalted, because every one has before him opportunities which are forbidden to the exploited who live in the lands of masters and slaves.

Maxim Gorki, who is both clear-sighted and long-sighted, has emphasized this accentuation of personality on the Soviet soil. The phenomenon is, in fact, the quite natural result of the participation of every one,

the responsibility of every one, and the importance of every one in the common labour. Socialism, which creates solidarity by organization, and organization by solidarity, gives to every person the maximum means of self-development in society.

If we now seek to examine more closely in what conditions and through what modes of expression proletarian literature is likely to develop, we must begin by considering separately the question of its form, its sheath and envelope. This form ought to be as perfected as possible. It ought to be a matter of using not old ploughs, but tractors. Literature, more than any other profession, demands technique. Even the deposit of tradition, which accumulates from age to age, ought not to be progressively eliminated, as is the case with the improvements of applied science and industry, which involve continuous replacement. It is always useful to know the work of the past, and sometimes essential to make use of it. This is the essence of artistic progress. There must, therefore, be technique and culture.

I attach a capital importance to the question of style, and I shall deal with it here in the first place. If I admit that old, classical distinction between "form" and "substance," it is for the very good reason of stressing the entirely Marxian point of view that the form ought to be organically suited to the substance, as the body is anatomically and physiologically suited to life. I must emphasize also, however, that this law is not obeyed in contemporary bourgeois literature. Here is to be observed the strange and paradoxical spectacle of a new and original form being

superimposed upon moral values which are outworn, and an ideology which is impoverished and shrivelled.

For proletarian writers there is nothing to be learned from the current bourgeois conception of literature. But the case is not at all the same where the technique of writing is concerned. Written literature — as I have often had occasion to repeat—has already made its revolution. (The same is true of pictorial art.) There is already in existence a new instrument, an excellent mode of expression. Between what was being written fifteen years ago and what is being written now, in ultra-civilized literatures, such as the French, there is such a difference that you can date a page at the first glance. There is, in fact, a modern style.

The transformation in the manner of writing consists in this: the elimination from the written word of the leisureliness, the conventionality, the circumlocution —I was on the point of saying the politeness—which were the mark of earlier writing. It consists in the paring and refurbishing of old metaphors; the more direct application of words to the thought or the object; the introduction into imagery—which is the essence of style—of scientific precision, swiftness, the straight line, the systematic short-cut; and in the shattering of traditional phraseology in order to endow it with bolder outlines and effects. Writing has become a skin rather than a clothing.

This revolution came about under the influence of hard-worn and picturesque popular speech—it has proletarian blood in its veins; as a result of the vigorous elbowing of that slang, terrible in its simplicity, which

was born in the trenches during the war; and also in consequence of the general invasion of the psychology and customs of the intellectual classes by a certain dose of Americanism, by a scientific, sporting, and thrusting type of mind. Out of these tendencies, before the war, were born Cubism and Futurism. These fell into excess and became ridiculous, were absurdly systematized, and were exploited by those mental gymnastics and fantastic games which are the mark of formalism and decadence. It remains true, however, that these movements accomplished a radical and final work of demolition of current phraseology and the rules of descriptive writing.

The style which we need, therefore, is already in existence. If proletarian writers accept the fact they will be regaining a large part of their inheritance; for this style has been renewed in accordance with those principles, combining simplicity with depth, of which all popular creation has given an example in the sphere of art and of the spirit. But the use of such an instrument is a business which must be learned. Gorki was not far wrong when he recently compared the apprenticeship of the working writer with that of the iron-worker.

Let us beware, therefore, of under-estimating the importance of a highly polished style, and of making childish confusions between naturalness, slovenliness, and vulgarity. On the other hand, let us avoid preciousness and complexity, and all the other ills to which intellectual richness is heir. Let us be on our guard to see that the new language preserves its freshness, its clarity, its force, and even its brutality;

but let us study all the means of expression which it puts at our disposal. Let us also—it is an effort well worth while—keep it free henceforward from all restricting formulæ: including those of the individual originality which is so tempting to a writer. The means of expression should adapt itself technically, scientifically—and that implies a variation of method —to the subject treated.

Here I may say that, so far as poetry is concerned, the breaking of outworn moulds has been carried too far. It was a mistake to cram rhythm and harmony into the old-clothes' bag of traditions which had better be left behind. There has been an excess of these surgical operations which have crippled poetry. Sooner or later we shall be forced, to some extent, to retrace our steps.

In what it is customary to call literary modes, and in the time-honoured formulæ of these modes, notably the novel and the drama, proletarian literature has some work of revision to do. It ought, in my opinion, to refer back to the past—not to the immediate past, with its mania for standardization which was the counterpart of political centralization, and its insistence upon sterilizing classic standards; but to the main popular tradition itself: the tradition of the popular song, of popular imagery, and of those great compositions, so luxuriantly alive in their immense scope (not yet fully revealed in their first enormous sprouting), the "mysteries" and the great epic poems. Proletarian literature must lay hold of these old forms with all the hugeness they would have had if classic formalism had not cramped and stifled their development.

But in resuming these vast moulds which are its own inheritance, proletarian literature will breathe into them its own new breath of life, and set within them the stirring, the thrusting, and the dreaming of that multitude of the present day which is the handmaiden of the future. To foresee such a tendency is no mere matter of prejudice; for it has all the marks of a natural force. It is no longer a question of political direction. The revolutionary offensive is the organization of a design of Life. It is perfectly normal, being the historical outcome which became scientifically inevitable once the masses of humanity saw the light.

Literature must hold up the mirror to this deliberate, united mobilization of the majority of living beings. It must reflect the types, the characters, the accomplishments and the deeds of that revolutionary history which, now that it has begun, must go on to its destined end. It must reveal the outward and the inward reactions of the present against the past.

There lies before it also a negative task: a task of destruction. It must attack the old state of things which the world on the march is busily superseding —its blots, its abuses, its anomalies, its monstrosities, great and small, general and particular, whether they appear in the realm of facts or of customs or of feelings. There are not two kinds of questions, bourgeois and proletarian, but two conflicting points of view. Proletarian literature also has a duty of pillorying. There are scenes and spectacles, vices and vilenesses, which it must expose before the world spectator, if only for the purpose of proceeding to sweep

them away before his eyes—or encouraging him to sweep them away himself.

The new literature must further attack old-fashioned "intellectuality," and, more especially, it must devote itself—through the agency of a particular section of its active writers—to destructive criticism of that bourgeois literature which reflects capitalist society in all its facets. This whole traffic ought to be assailed, directly and violently, in its own stronghold. I spoke some months ago to an audience in Moscow about this literature, artificial, superficial, and decadent, which, nevertheless, still possesses a certain prestige in consequence of the virtuosity of some of its practitioners, the rich tradesmen of letters.

The mark of these trashy books is disorder, incoherence, emptiness, banality (there is no difference between many of them except for their covers), a passion for detail, the worldly glitter of a Marcel Proust, the cultivation of vice by an André Gide, or of superstition by a Paul Claudel, a constant striving after effect and the exceptional case (the mad and the perverse swarm among these fictitious characters whom one would dearly love to have at the other side of a barricade), the splitting of the ultimate hair, the analysis of the last quintessence (Stendhal and Dostoievski are nowhere in it)—in short, the stifling of life all along the line by selfishness, division, and dissection. All this decadent anarchy has given birth to but one theory, and that absolutely negative—art for art's sake.

To this museum, which ought to interest us only as a cock-shy, our would-be "popular" writers of

to-day contribute an inverted snobbery, making the worker and the peasant the last word in fashion, apparently in the belief that you can change your subject as easily as your necktie. They are as much friends of the people as our nice democratic officials. Whether they depict workers or whether they depict degenerates, they deserve no more respect from that life force, brutal in its strength, which lays hold upon a new character and means to cram it into literature even if it breaks the moulds—the collective person, the crowd, the mass.

From the considerations which I have tried to marshal in some sort of order above, it follows that proletarian literature represents at the moment a very strongly marked orientation, a new grouping and polarization of intellectual forces; but that, at the same time, there are as yet very few writers who are wholly proletarian writers. There is hardly one who fulfils all the requisite conditions. Of most of those whose names suggest themselves it may be said that they are proletarian writers under one aspect alone. An organized force of proletarian writers (we shall produce one at any moment in France) has not as yet gone beyond the stage of discussion and preliminary training.

It is our first duty, by clearing the ground and bringing it into the light of day, to foster the development of the great world programme which runs parallel, on the plane of ideas, with that of the creative realists of Socialism. We can assist this development in proportion as we endow it with consciousness and clarify it. Let us not forget in our impatience that it takes time to co-ordinate and amalgamate intellectual

and artistic movements, or rather that such movements must co-ordinate and amalgamate themselves. The human spirit moves slowly in matters of this kind. The period necessary for crystallization in the world of intellect may be compared with that which is invariably required for crystallization in the world of matter. The delay may be longer or shorter according to the circumstances, but in any case it is the result, more or less direct, of a profound process of elaboration.

At least, however, we have now created a workshop for our labour; and the most important part of the collaboration which we need will be supplied by the representatives of the now adolescent Russian Revolution.

XI

BEWARE OF ILLUSIONS!

THERE is no getting away from the fact. Many of our Russian friends fall victims to the prestige of French fashions and "the latest from Paris." I am speaking of matters literary, and in this sphere "the latest from Paris," which is now fashionable, is of much poorer quality than in the case of trinkets or costumes.

I strike the somewhat dramatic note of warning, which gives to the title of this chapter something of the air of a manifesto, as the sequel to a walk which I have just taken in front of the bookshop windows and through the libraries of Moscow. It is the result also of a little voyage of exploration which I have made among the latest essays and reviews of the very competent body of Soviet critics, and of a number of conversations in which I have taken part.

In the fronts of the shops which sell foreign literature in the capital of Red Russia and the Red world, one frequently encounters examples of the most trivial and the most empty productions of our French literature in decadence, and the critics here seem to me to take seriously authors who are not taken seriously even by themselves.

I have said so in a Moscow paper (*Pravda*, August 1928), which is in the habit of dealing with questions

of wide scope. I did so because there is here, in my opinion, a very grave anomaly. I emphasized this anomaly by drawing attention to the following matters of fact: Here is a people which dominates all others by the new conception of life, the new plan of social architecture, which it has fashioned—a people, that is to say, which dominates by the power of the spirit. Here is a people which has changed the course of history, and is in process of transforming the face of the globe; which is the founder and will be the ancestor of a new epoch; and which, besides, is sketching in the sphere of letters and the arts the outline of works which will be cut to its own measure and follow its own form.

On the superb torrent of this deluge of health and logic one sees floating mediocre productions written for the foreign market, and the shapes of foreign authors whose names one is almost ashamed to mention. I am far from presuming to dismiss the whole literary product of any modern country in one sweeping judgment, æsthetical or ethical. I am far from denying that there are in France books of a high quality. The names of some—not all—of them are known here; but it is very obvious that there is no proper line of demarcation between these and the others, either from the point of view of the criticisms they receive or from the point of view of the circulations they enjoy. It is a state of affairs which calls for energetic protest.

It is, naturally, to be expected that the "new man" who is growing up here should be impelled by an ardent desire for information, an urge to learn and

assimilate, a burning curiosity. That is his duty—but only on condition that he does not fall a victim to his own passion for reading matter, that he does not cherish illusions about the quality of most of the productions which are in fashion in our Western countries, and that he learns to discriminate among the results of his dippings into foreign literature.

What earthly reason is there—to dot the i's and cross the t's—why so much respect should be shown, even in enlightened circles of revolutionary Russia, to writers like Marcel Proust, Giraudoux, and Cocteau? Nobody denies that these writers are virtuosos. But they are virtuosos of a particularly dangerous kind. Their cleverness is that of jugglers and conjurers, and their culture is refinement and decay. They represent perfectly a society which has come to the end of its tether; and every one of their books is its trade-mark —and its epitaph.

Take Marcel Proust, upon whom Paris has turned a limelight of publicity, of which some gleams have crept in here. He is a minor personality. He was an autocrat of the *salon*, a dresser of dolls, a collector and a fastidious ticketer of insignificant details. For the whole of his life he sorted out, atom by atom and minute by minute, the doings and the movements and the psychology of the most stupid caste in the world—the idle rich. With these he filled a whole elegant pile of volumes, as one fills a pile of trunks, and exhaling the same odour of something shut away. In all this there was never one real idea, never any true life. For an artist ideas are more than life, but life is better than ideas, and out of setting, ideas, and

life talent makes an alliance, and genius makes a synthesis.

Or take the precious literature of Paul Morand and Giraudoux, internationalists of *hôtels de luxe*, observers of the restaurant car and the lift, diplomats of the watering-places, who register snapshots like a camera, and have the sharp, precise impressionism of a camera —sometimes amusing enough in its foreshortening— and the brains of a camera, and who "shock the bourgeoisie" by way of flattering it. In their books appearance takes the place of reality and effect the place even of appearance, turbulence is the substitute for action, and sighs are blown away by draughts.

Or take Jean Cocteau, sweet-peppery, charming in the surprises of his clowning, the aristocratic acrobat whose famous conversion—when in one bound he ascended to the right hand of God—was nothing but a trick of the circus-ring.

Or take—though here you have a more serious quality—André Gide, who has raised homosexuality to the level of an art, and by so doing has acquired a great moral influence. To-day he talks about everything with that authority with which scandal invests him, and he has become an arbiter.

Or take another category—those who push Dostoievski to the point of absurdity. The great Dostoievski, whose name is brandished like a puppet by certain specialists—this is perhaps the principal bait in the trap into which the foreign public allows itself to be lured—was an analyst gone mad, but he was also a matchless creator of a living synthesis. He could take a man to pieces, but he could also put him

together again to make him a character of drama. His contemporary imitators in the West can follow him in no department of his genius except his mania for dissection. To put a character so dismembered together again and breathe life into him you need vigour and enlightenment; and that is precisely what is lacking in all those who take for their model a travesty of Dostoievski.

In my view too much is made in France of all these writers of the later Empire. That, however, is understandable in our country, where they correspond exactly to the last refinements and the culminating blemishes of a sick society whose monuments, crumbling and falling into dust, are ripe for demolition. But here, where everything is called in question with the utmost readiness, their very existence ought to be called in question.

Moreover, my Soviet friends, make no mistake about it: these people are your inveterate enemies. Your solidarity and the rude strength of your youth offends them, these people who are the fine flower of that bourgeoisie which remains the ruling caste until the next earthquake comes. They have lost all sense of life, and they are for ever desperately seeking some new thing removed from reality—whether in snobbery, or in pyrotechnics, or in some dishevelled exoticism, or in some case of abnormality.

They are just as much reactionaries as that fossil, Paul Bourget, or that sad and surly scribe, Charles Maurras, or that superfluous singer of nursemaids' tales, Paul Claudel. Remember that they bask in the smiles of the official powers that be, who make use of

them for propaganda purposes, and in those of the *Académie Française*, that museum of the living dead who are so oddly designated immortals; and that their shopwindow is *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, a paper solidly reactionary and neo-Catholic, subsidised by that Librairie Larousse which revises its dictionary of history and geography in terms of nationalism.

I need hardly say that I would not have any one be a sectary or, what is worse, an ignoramus. I claim merely that appreciation ought to be well balanced and well informed. It ought to relegate to their proper little place those phantoms who play no part of any real importance in thought and art, and are merely the cultured waste-products of a complex civilization; and, where they are concerned, it ought to be on its guard against those temptations of the devil of refinement to which we are all exposed—since we are all, by force of circumstances, impregnated with an excessively old tradition.

On the other hand, due homage ought to be paid to those who deserve it—writers worth while, good, stout craftsmen. There are such writers, even in contemporary French literature. We should admire, for example, a magnificent writer such as Ramuz, even though his thought be stuffed with the superstitions and the prejudices of another age. We should recognize the mastery over words of the poets, Jules Supervielle and Luc Durtain—even though the first, a lifelong lodger in the Tower of Ivory, is not altogether one of us, and even though in the second you have merely an amiable friend who only half understands you. We should appreciate the sense of pity

and the sincere large-heartedness of certain books of Duhamel; the vivid pictures of some of Dorgelès (though this sympathetic writer seems to have lost the direct inspiration of yesteryear, and allowed himself to be taken under the official wing); and the personality of Jules Romains, however thoroughly bourgeois he may for the moment show himself to be.

There are, besides, a whole string of good representatives of a French school of thought, near enough to your own, who count among the most useful models of the present generation from the point of view of technique: Blaise Cendrars, Jean-Richard Bloch, Léon Werth, and Charles Vildrac, not to speak of Marcel Martinet, H. Poulaille, Tristan Rémy, René Maran, Magdeleine Marx, and Vaillant-Couturier.

XII

THE WORKING OF THE SEVEN-HOURS' DAY

It will be recalled that the TSIK (Central Committee) of the U.S.S.R., in its manifesto of 15 October, 1927, decided upon the gradual adoption in the Union of the seven-hours' day "without reduction of wages." It will also be remembered what excitement this "sensational" news aroused everywhere at the time. The bold innovation was vehemently attacked by the bourgeois newspapers, which declared it to be an infringement of the rights of capital, a danger to industry, and, in any case, unworkable in practice.

For Socialists the question of the seven-hours' day was one of capital importance. One of the essential articles in the claims of the working classes is a reduction in the hours of the working day, which is regarded as no less important than the increase of wages and the maintenance of the right to strike. In the course of contemporary history the working-class struggle has centred around the Eight Hours' Law.

The eight-hours' day, after having been solemnly promised to the proletariat by the consortium of the European Great Powers, and after having figured in the post-war international agreements, has little by little, either officially or in practice, been annulled. In Germany, in Italy, and in England the length of the working day has been legally extended, and

everywhere else the principle of eight hours is encroached upon or threatened. Contrary to the legend of continual social progress which prevails under the present "democratic" regimes, this conquest of the workers, which bore directly upon their well-being, their culture, and the raising of their status, has been either snatched from them or bitterly disputed.

It was, therefore, a gesture of enormous significance to raise before the whole world the question of the reduction of the working day by a proclamation that the eight-hours' day, everywhere contested in the last ditch by the great lords of industry, was still too long, and that a bold attempt was being made to apply a seven-hours' day. Apart from its social and political reactions in the international sphere, this initiative, which had a direct bearing upon one of the great stakes in the struggle of classes, and gave the workers an extra free hour a day, had the further advantage of decreasing the number of unemployed in the U.S.S.R. This reduction, according to Russian economists, will amount, when the law is fully in force, to half a million.

Socialism, or rather present-day Communism, which is Socialism in action, has in its programme a six-hours' day, towards which the seven-hours' day is an arithmetical step. It was a question of translating this article of theory into practice, and of introducing an immense reform into modern industrialism. Could it be done without damage to national economy, which was only one cog in world economy?

Let us take the facts in due order. In December 1927, the Fifteenth Congress of the Communist Party in Moscow took a decision in line with that of the

Government as to immediate experiment with the seven-hours' day. In January 1928, a working day of seven hours was brought into force in a textile factory at Vagianokskaia, in the province of Tver. By the end of that month fourteen factories had adopted the reform, and by the end of March twenty-three establishments. By the end of November twenty-eight enterprises, employing 125,000 workers, were operating on the seven-hours' day. These were nearly all textile factories. To them must be added thirteen factories in the Ukraine, with 9000 workers, which had introduced it into their workshops.

The Central Executive Committee, in its *plenum* of November 1928, decided that the seven-hours' day should be applied in 1928–9 to 20 per cent of the workers in all industries and transport services, and that in 1929–30 it should be applied to an equal number of workers, making a total of 40 per cent by the end of 1930. Finally it was decided that, by the end of 1933, all Soviet workers should be operating on the seven-hours' day.

I now want to examine the present state of the question and the results obtained by the application, which so far is partial, of this new and vitally important clause in working-class legislation. I have not read any such balance-sheet. So far as I know, no general study has yet been made. I endeavoured to investigate on the spot the data which are now available for assessing and appreciating the consequences of the substitution of the seven-hours' day for the eight-hours' day in a section of Soviet industry, and I collected all the detailed documents which had been

published. I also sought the expert opinion of Ivan Ivanovitch Koutouzof, secretary of the Textile Trust. This comrade could speak only for the textile industry; but, as we have seen, the application of the seven-hours' day has as yet been practically confined to this industry alone.

It was no small matter to modify the working day in this way. The application of a seven-hours' day could not be envisaged in practice without a coincident modification of the working routine, in order to avoid a sudden drop in production. To adjust this routine to the seven-hours' day work was very drastically rationalized. A system was adopted by which three shifts provided continual labour, night work was enforced for both men and women employees (there are a number of women engaged in the textile industry), and the machines were kept running without intermission.

The first effect noted in a number of establishments was a stricter punctuality and a stronger sense of discipline on the part of the workers. Lateness and absence diminished to a very remarkable extent, so that the seven-hours' day tended to be in fact seven hours of work at full stretch. In every industrial district reunions and meetings were held with the object of explaining to the workers the significance and the meaning of the reform which was being introduced, and which it was intended to study in all its bearings before it was made general.

At the outset a number of workers were not in favour of the reform. It was pointed out to them that the reduction of working hours came to the same thing

as an increase of wages, and some of them somewhat naïvely demanded the latter in place of it. It had to be explained to them that, in face of the activity of world capitalism, which would not hear of it at any price, such a reform could not be undertaken with any prospect of success unless due regard was paid, not only to the interests of individual workers, but also to the general interests of Soviet production against world competition. The force of this argument was generally appreciated by the workers, and at one factory meeting one of them invented this happy formula for expressing the high productivity which was the essential feature of the seven-hours' day: "We must not speak of seven hours, but of 420 minutes."

Most of the beneficial results expected have been achieved. In the first place there has been a reduction in the number of unemployed. By the end of October 19,000 more workers were employed in the textile factories which had adopted the seven-hours' day. In the next place there has been an increase in production.

Let us take some examples. At Ivanovo Vosnesenska (a great textile industry centre near Moscow) the directing committee of the trust has made public the following balance-sheet of three months' working in the factories which have adopted the seven-hours' day —all the factories in the district, with the exception of that of Dzerjinski: number of additional workers, 4222; gross increase in production: raw product, 40 per cent; finished product, 20 per cent. The increase of production carries with it an increase in

wages. For example, in the spinning-mill of Rodnikovskaia the average daily wage was in October 1·98 roubles, in January 2·8, and in February 2·13.

It is necessary to underline this point. The seven-hours' day is obviously beneficial for the workers so long as it does not involve a decrease in wages. On the other hand, it would seem at first sight that this social advantage could only be bought at the price of a one-eighth decrease in production. That sounds logical; but it ignores the physical law that intensity of work and application to it increase in proportion as the number of working hours is reduced.

The rationalization which produces the maximum of effort becomes possible in proportion as the daily duration of effort is decreased. In the case which I have cited it was rationalization—that is to say, a calculated intensification of work—which permitted an increase in production; but it was the seven-hours' day which made possible a certain measure of rationalization. It would be altogether wide of the mark to argue that the same rationalization, applied to an eight-hours' day, would mean a one-seventh increase in production; for the rationalization which is applicable to eight hours is not the same as that which is applicable to seven hours.

Let me take another example. The greatest clothing factory of Leningrad, "Volodarski," adopted the seven-hours' day on 1 May, 1928. During the first month the production of clothing increased by 18 per cent, while the cost price remained the same. The half-yearly balance-sheet issued at the end of October showed similar results; production was 26 per cent

higher than in 1927, although the increase in the number of workers was only 8 per cent in the first quarter, and 5 per cent in the second.

Before the reform the average daily wage was 3·49 roubles; it had increased to 3·85 roubles. Working discipline had improved, and absences had fallen by 6 to 7 per cent. The machines worked without intermission. Two figures will give some idea of the division and the rationalization of labour to which resort had been made: the manufacture of jackets had formerly been divided into 65 operations, and was now divided into 125; and the manufacture of trousers, which was effected in 43 operations, now required 76.

Here is a third example. The seven-hours' day was brought into force in the great paper factory, "Gosnak," of Leningrad, which manufactures notably the paper for bank-notes, postage stamps, and so on. This factory employs 1400 workers. Here the seven-hours' experiment was brilliantly vindicated. Output increased by 17 per cent, and hourly wages by 11 per cent, while the proportion of wages to cost price fell by 4 per cent.

Let us return to the textile industry. At Novoie Bolchevo the seven-hours' day was adopted on 16 January, 1928. The output of the individual worker, under the eight-hours' system, was 310 kilos. In the quarters following the adoption of seven hours his output rose successively to 343 and 345—in other words, the "intensity of the working hour" had increased in these proportions. The difference in production between the eight-hours' day and the seven-hours' day, taken separately, was a diminishing

difference; in the second quarter it was 3·8 per cent, and in the third quarter it had fallen to 1 per cent. The cost price of a hundred kilos of texture, however, had decreased by 19·15 per cent by comparison with the preceding year.

The increase in wages has been very marked. At Novoie Bolchevo, for example, since the adoption of the seven hours the wages of one category of workers rose by 8·7 per cent, and for another category, in this case women workers, the increase was 16 per cent in February, and 19 per cent in September. This rise in wages, as I have already pointed out, follows upon the increase in output. The average production of the individual worker increased by 50 per cent, and that of the whole body of workers at Novoie Bolchevo by 57 per cent.

These results are obviously very convincing. They demonstrate that the application of the seven-hours' day is a perfectly sensible, and therefore practicable, measure, which has nothing but advantages to offer both to the workers and to productive industry as a whole. It is essential, however, that the transition from the eight-hours' to the seven-hours' day should not be effected without prolonged technical preparation. It is no less indispensable that it should be preceded by conferences with the workers, in order that they may be brought to appreciate all the facets of the great and complex problem which has to be solved.

Where technical organization and preparation of this kind have not been taken in hand, the reform runs the risk of failure. In several cases it has not given

satisfactory results, for the reason that adequate measures had not been taken to prevent dislocation and disappointment. It presents, in fact, difficulties of which some are very serious, and they must be minimized in advance. Among these difficulties is the lack of experience among the unemployed who are absorbed. The increase of production has created a sudden demand for raw materials, and in some cases there has had to be a certain laxity about quality.

Mention must also be made of the problem of housing for the additional workers. This difficulty is aggravated by the enforcement of night work and by the necessity of having all the workpeople of both sexes housed at relatively close quarters to the factory. But since, as I have already shown, the seven-hours' day can balance the eight-hours' day in national and world economy only by a meticulous rationalization, the working men and the working women must be prepared to adjust themselves to the tactical needs of labour; and for that purpose they must understand them thoroughly.

To sum up: It has now been proved quite definitely that there is nothing intrinsically impossible about the adoption of the seven-hours' day. It registers, on the contrary, an advance from every point of view in the history of labour and of the industrial struggle for existence. On the other hand, it has been no less plainly demonstrated that this modification calls for a great number of preliminary measures: instruction of the masses, organization of machine work, housing of the workers, lighting, ventilation, safety devices

—which are rendered especially necessary by night work—and regulation of the latter.

But all these secondary problems, difficult though they are, can be solved in principle, and even rapidly enough in practice. The only serious argument left against the seven-hours' day is the hard usage of machines. Submitted to the intensive strain of functioning without intermission, in an endless chain of work, they cannot be expected to last for the same length of time as under traditional conditions. A period of fifteen years is estimated as the limit of life of machines and looms in the textile industry.

This, however, is not an insurmountable difficulty. The remarkable increase in the output of labour, in all cases where the transition from the old system to the new has been properly studied and prepared for in advance, indicates that, when the seven-hours' day has become general, its all-round achievements will be triumphant in spite of the heavier mortality in industrial machinery.

The results so far obtained are such that the Soviet economists are already envisaging the possibility of introducing a six-hours' day. One of the directors of petroleum production at Baku, an industry which more than any other in the Union has to take foreign competition into account, told me that it would be much easier to rationalize work for a six-hours' than for a seven-hours' day. The former would involve four shifts a day, whereas the latter requires fractional adaptation in the distribution of shifts over the normal course of twenty-four hours. Commissary of Labour Schmidt recently told the Committee of Trusts of

Russia proper that, in his opinion, it was advisable that factories which contemplated adopting the seven-hours' day should study the question of immediate transition to six hours.

Taking advantage of the experience which has been gained, and going boldly ahead as the directing organism of the Workers' and Peasants' State ought to do, the TSIK has adopted a series of measures designed to guard against difficulties which may arise and obviate such partial checks as have occurred. These measures are independent of the plans for the methodical extension of the seven-hours' day which I have outlined above.

One of the most important covers the field of propaganda among the workers in order to familiarize them with the functioning of all the many cog-wheels involved in the seven-hours' law. It is laid down that the application of the seven-hours' day must be made the subject of technical preparation sufficiently far in advance to avoid the risk of sudden disturbance. It has further been decided to build workers' dwellings in the industrial centres where the number of workers is expected to be increased. Similarly infants' crèches, schools, and hospitals will be organized in adequate number for the factories which adopt the seven-hours' day. The decision has also been taken to exempt expectant and nursing mothers from night work.

These decisions of the TSIK show that the question has definitely and finally passed to the sphere of general realization. The seven-hours' day, that ardently desired objective of the immense international army of labour, that pledge of progress and of social justice,

that logical perfectionment of productive effort, that seven-hours' day against which the capitalist powers thunder execration and excommunication, is henceforth solidly established in the Union. This means that inevitably, sooner or later, this admirable and desirable reform, born and nurtured in the Socialist fatherland, will be imposed throughout the rest of the world by the will of the masses.

XIII

A FINE UKRAINIAN FILM

ORELOVITCH, director of the Odessa section of the Ukrainian State Cinema ("Voufkou") has just given me, at a private showing, the first exhibition of a new film, *The Arsenal*, a work of Dojenko, "shot" partly at Kiev, partly at Leningrad, and partly at Odessa. *The Arsenal* is, in my opinion, of the same high quality as the striking film productions of Eisenstein and Poudovkin—some of whose creations have been shown abroad, despite the censorship. It is a great film.

Towards the outskirts of Odessa, on one of those immense avenues, so impressive and so purely Russian in their aspect, which run out into the country, is a walled enclosure. Here is the vast kingdom of the cinema: the domain of the local group of directors, artists, and workers who are charged, according to their several abilities, with projecting life upon the screen.

The enclosure is a complete world in itself. There are within it plains and fields, forests and streets, buildings of all kinds, which are settings in three dimensions, and also buildings more enduring, in which are housed workshops and offices, and a great studio for the "shooting" of interior scenes. There is also a little theatre with a few hundred seats for the showing of films or "cuts" of film.

It was in this almost empty theatre—there were

only four of us—that in its swarming atoms of black and white the new drama was unrolled. None of the comrades who accompanied me was sufficiently familiar with French to be able to translate to me the Ukrainian text of the captions. For all practical purposes, therefore, I was witnessing a film without words.

Was it for this reason that the successive episodes of the film did not always seem to me strictly and logically linked together? However that may be, this is the only criticism which could possibly be raised against the film; and it is at best a superficial criticism. In any case, even when the connecting thread seemed to disappear, the sense of drama was never absent; it grew in cumulative effect, and it carried with it the unity and the coherence necessary for the understanding of the drama which flashed before my eyes. My final testimony was that the work as a whole was inspiring and heartrending in its appeal.

The Arsenal is the history of a workers' rising in a munitions factory at Kiev. This was the first eddy in the Ukraine, one year later, of the October Revolution. The revolt was suppressed by the soldiers and police of the ferocious White regime then in power, and its ringleaders were executed. The film ends, with the shedding of the blood of the liberators, on a note of anguish, and also of anger and execration.

The successive scenes which embody this theme are all gripping, and some positively works of genius, in their boldness, intensity, and scope, and the series as a whole is overwhelming. From the technical point of view the film is a remarkable achievement. Rich and many-sided, but short and compact, it is glittering

in its detail. Its photography is almost brutal in its brilliance. The sobriety of its settings is in striking contrast with the dizzying movement, the thrilling headlong rush of its action. In the first part a runaway troop train, careering at ever increasing speed, seems at one moment, as the square shapes of the wagons dash past, to strike your eyes like blows of a paddle-wheel; at another moment it seems to carry you away with it, and at a third to run over your body.

The Soviet film directors are past-masters in this succession of images which jostle one another. I had already experienced, in Moscow a few months before, a similar impression when Poudovkin showed me at "Meschrabpom" some "cuts" from his film, *The Descendant*, which he was then engaged in finishing. In that case it was a stream of horsemen at a gallop which made a terrible kaleidoscope. Similarly in *The Arsenal* the squadrons end by rushing through your head, and you are not at all sure that the cyclone of them has not jerked you away. It is the same with the synthetic play of the factory machines—a whirlwind of entrails of steel.

Dojenko, before he became a maker of films, was a maker of caricatures. That is quite a normal transition. He is a creator with a strong sense of the salient feature, the essential gesture, the expressive short-cut, and he makes amazing use of these in this film, at once overflowing and systematic, which one might almost describe as proceeding by leaps and bounds. Most of the time the scenes are brusquely interrupted, to be resumed again after others. They are broken into fragments, sometimes in the midst of a gesture; and

this precipitate succession of shearings holds attention spell-bound from start to finish.

The creator of *The Arsenal* gets some of his strongest effects by immobility. Some of his creatures remain for some time absolutely motionless; and the thing strikes you and overwhelms you as if you were being stoned. At the beginning of the film there are scenes conveying the misery, the famine, and the destitution which war sows over the countryside. Beside a street door, against the wall of her house, stands a woman, leaning forward. Her face is hidden by a kerchief which hangs like a veil. She has the air of youth; but she is at the end of her tether, and she does not move. A drunken man appears, with his sabre knocking against his boots. He marches along the street, stops in front of the feminine form, raises his hand, and fondles her breast. She does not move. He passes on. That is all. It is a terrible scene, profoundly moving in its impressive simplicity.

Then comes another picture of the misery created by war and the too long absence of husbands. A woman appears in a darkened room. Nothing is to be seen but the two vague outlines of the window and of her face. In her arms she holds a tiny baby. A soldier—the ghost of a soldier—passes across the window or the wall, and demands of her: "Who?" From similar corners rise similar mothers, and similar ghosts who question them. At the end of this series of visions the word "Who?" is written on the screen in Ukrainian, German, and French: "Kto?" "Wer?" "Qui?"

There has been much talk about these tragic affairs

of soldiers whose place at home someone else has taken—these banal but harrowing dramas of love, and death, and life that must have its way. Dojenko has summed up the poetry of them once for all in his light and shade.

Another evil of war is insensate cruelty. The mother of a family is in the middle of her room, in a reverie, with her wits wandering. She is hungry and cold, and she suffers not only for herself, but also for the children around her. In a corner, smaller than the children, is the father, a cripple, a wreck of the war sent home. The woman says nothing. The children whimper and tug at her skirts. In a field a man, a poor one-armed man tottering with weakness and hunger, is leading a very old horse, half-starved and deformed. A sudden surge of rage, of madness, of cruelty possesses them. The mother suddenly whips her children spitefully; and the man suddenly beats and kicks the old horse so furiously that he falls exhausted to the ground beside the poor beast, which patiently waits for him to get up again.

The brakes of the train have failed to act. The soldiers who throng the wagons leap from the mad runaway. You see their dim wraiths surging side by side into space, like a shell-burst, as they jump from life to death. One of them had an accordion on which he was playing to amuse his comrades. The accordion-player is dashed to earth into nothingness. But the accordion itself, also fallen to earth, still moves and jerks, so that for some moments the long, sinuous, puckered instrument takes on the appearance of an organism of flesh and blood.

Another scene is a public place, an official ceremony, with orators and a whole series of "right-thinking" people applauding demagogy to order, monstrous bourgeois masks, with a varnish of intellectualism. Then there are "popes" perorating and psalm-singing, pompous charlatans, Christs of the market-place, with their dupes turning up the whites of their eyes to heaven around them.

On the battle-field, caught in a barbed wire entanglement, lies stretched the corpse of a young soldier, showing his white teeth as he roars with laughter. As Andreas Latzko wrote in one of his most moving novels, you have to be mad to keep your reason in the nightmare of war. Another, still alive and on his feet, stops on a summit from which he surveys a part of the battle-field, and he, too, starts laughing for all he is worth—the monstrous laughter of a madman.

A third soldier stands on the top of a hill, sharply silhouetted in black. He reflects, then he throws his rifle on the ground, and stands there empty-handed. Along comes an officer—one of Petlioura's officers—a bullet-headed fellow, shouting at the top of his voice, with his heavy jowl working with frenzy like Punch, and brandishing an enormous revolver. The soldier stands still, with his empty hands hanging limp, and pays no attention to him. In vain the officer circles around him, vomiting forth threats. The pose of that soldier, turned into a statue of steel, calm and gentle, but tense and unyielding, is of an almost sublime beauty. In the next scene the statue lies prostrate on the ground, at the feet of the cave-man. All that one

sees of it is two feet and the point of the discarded bayonet.

The nurse is writing a letter which the wounded soldier, stretched in the ambulance, is dictating to her for his wife. He has finished the letter, and is silent. "What address?" she asks. He does not answer. He will never answer. He is dead, with his head fallen back. The nurse is alone with the lost letter in her hands.

Here is an intellectual with tufted chin and artist's tie, a raucous and rancorous bourgeois whom we saw perorating in another scene. This is after the defeat of the workers. Our gentleman is in a room with a worker covered by his revolver. "Walk to the wall!" he orders. The other, who is unarmed, obeys. "Now advance towards me!" The worker advances step by step towards the levelled revolver. He is so calm, so unperturbed, that as the victim approaches the man who has him covered loses his head, as if in the presence of something supernatural. He is afraid; he trembles and he cannot fire. The other stretches out his hand and seizes the revolver, and it is he who fires.

More tragic still is the execution of the mutinous workers. Here the severity, the concentration of the drama, in its figures and its setting, in the heartrending simplicity of its effect, reaches perfection. The scene is a cellar. A non-commissioned officer, or a policeman, in a long coat, with his cap pulled down over his eyes, and the jowl of a brute (though in this case the beast has not the exaggeration of a caricature), draws his revolver, mumbles something,

cocks it, and fires slowly — once, twice, five times in all.

He disappears, and one sees his target; one by one the martyrs appear against the wall on which some grating throws a harsh light: workers, with virile, determined faces, one who is young and whose eyes shine with exaltation, another who is old and whose eyes are kindly—all sorts of men, the very types of those you may meet in any factory. In just so long as it takes to smile or to cry, one by one they collapse in a heap. When the lights go up in the hall, wiping that vision off the screen, one has the feeling of coming up from the depths where great social changes are born in frightfulness.

That is, in fact, the definite impression which is left upon you by the whole development of this film, torturing in its intensity. Once again the great, free artists of the Soviet cinema have produced a work so powerfully human in its appeal that beside it the productions of our great money-makers of the West look more than ever ridiculous. Let us be glad to pay homage to the name of this fine new soldier of the flashing art—Dojenko.

XIV

SOME NEW SOVIET FILMS

I HAVE recently been present in the U.S.S.R. at the showing of a number of new films which are not yet released for public exhibition, but shortly will be. Some of these are works of the greatest power and worth.

Eisenstein took me into a little hall of "Sovkino" to see a trade show of his film *The Common Front*, which has been in preparation for some years. The subject of this film is the immense drama of the countryside—the new movement of the peasant masses towards land-working in common. Within that massive head of genius Eisenstein, with those gifts of his which the Soviet Union has put to such abundant use—letting their influence expand in all directions and giving a spice to oratory, literature, and art alike—has created something profoundly majestic and moving. This picturesque and overpowering epic of common effort which takes shape in all its brilliance before your eyes has an irresistible attraction and inspiration.

There is no symbolism about it. It is simply massive fragments of reality set end to end. Nor is there any synthesis or generalization of a literary order. There is no more than a strong organic unity among the diverse elements in the panorama of actuality which carries you away with it. First you are a spectator

of the misery and the insecurity of those who formerly insisted—and for that matter still do—upon staying on their own plot of ground and cultivating it for the subsistence of their own family. Their poor little calculations are almost always at fault. They end by becoming nothing but the beasts of burden of the rich peasant. Mastered by him or by the elements, with no resource except prayer to the images of the "pope" —which do no good to anybody except the "pope" —the isolated peasants one fine day find that the ground has crumbled beneath their feet, and that ruin has arrived to expel them from their hearth and home.

But now a great and fruitful harmony comes into being in the fields. A network of labour extends with scientific symmetry over the wide spaces. *Koulak* and drought and tempest have less hold over this far-flung system, in which men mutually supporting one another take on the strength of unity and the peasant becomes a giant. It is a fine sight to see labour-in-common in progress, with its swiftness and its scope of perfected design, raising the harvest, developing the yield and richness of the earth, in an all-powerful rhythm of which single, scattered ants could never dream.

All this Eisenstein shows in a sweep across the countryside, a sweep through Time and Space, which carries our eyes and our thoughts from the stumbling, animal effort of the lamentable bipeds who draw the plough themselves like a yoke of Hell, to the harmonious arabesques of tractors and machines in movement on an immense scale of things. This film—which will not surprise those who saw reason to expect much

from the author of *Armoured Cruiser "Potemkin"* and *October* — was "shot" without professional actors. Its whole material was peasants taken in their natural surroundings as they were caught by the eye of the camera. They played their roles unconsciously, or even despite themselves.

It was necessary to pursue over a period of months running into years the young woman who serves as the principal character, the human pivot, of the film, in order to extract from her the movements and the attitudes which were needed and which she "had in her." In the actual production she has a leading place and the action partly depends on her. Yet she remains ignorant of the work as a whole, which she has never understood, and in which, indeed, she is not even interested. Like the others, she has been only a passive instrument in the hands of a great realist of life.

I saw also at "Sovkino" a film based on a novel of mine: *Le Revenant qui ne revient pas*, which interested me profoundly. The reason why this film work interested me so much was that my collaboration in it seemed to me infinitesimal. The Director, Room, and his colleagues have transformed the short, sentimental story I wrote into a vast tragedy, in which the life of American prisoners is depicted with a prodigious wealth of detail. Room has built up a whole prison, a monumental, many-storied cage, an enormous transparent building which can be completely supervised from an armoured revolving turret in the centre, from which a warder has the innumerable cells continually under his vigilant eyes. A prison mutiny and its suppression—among other means by the use of

jets of water under high pressure, which sweep the cells—are handled with masterly effect. I was unsparing in my applause.

"Meschrabpom," the other film studio of Moscow, has made two important films. One of them, *Storm over Asia*, is already known not only to the public of Moscow, but also to the public of Berlin and Paris, where it has had considerable success. This film, which in Moscow was entitled *The Descendant*, is by Poudovkin, emulator of Eisenstein, and distinguished author of *The Sea* and *The End of St. Petersburg*. The work is remarkable for the scope of its scenic development and the striking variety of its settings. It deals with a Mongol peasant who, exasperated by the exactions of English concessionaires, organizes a guerrilla warfare, which is carried on in the mountains of Mongolia by men whose faces are extraordinarily expressive.

At the outset the English try to shoot him. Then they decide that it will suit them better to turn him into an exotic potentate over whom they can exercise their influence. The dumbfounded man at first allows himself to be made the instrument of their design, and then he revolts. At the end of the film, whose development is dominated by a superb symbolism, he stands out as the embodiment of war upon the foreign exploiter.

This fine film has another element of interest—a very curious reconstruction of the strange and sumptuous sacred festivals of Mongolia, with their processions and masked dances and their high priests in their vestments. This is the first time that these

ceremonies have been shown to the Western public. Hitherto we have had to content ourselves with the written descriptions of a few travellers. Now we are taken right into the heart of that old and magnificent tradition which still lives on in one part of boundless Asia.

"Meschrabpom" has also made another film which is an adaptation for the screen of Tolstoy's *The Living Dead*, directed by Otzep. The structure of this film is entirely traditional, and even *vieux jeu*. Its interest, however, is well sustained, and attention is drawn and held by the thesis which stands out from the intrigue: the right of husband and wife to divorce by mutual consent. But the principal attraction of this new work is the fact that the leading part is taken by Poudovkin himself—the part of the husband who is ready to sacrifice himself, and in the end does so by way of suicide. Poudovkin, known as a great dramatist, shows striking qualities of simplicity and sincerity in his new profession of actor. His serious, soulful face, with its air of unruffled youth, but also something strange about it, registers intense impressions of concentrated emotion.

Another new production, *The Gay Canary* (directed by L. Koulechov), is an amusing picture of the fever of revels and intrigues which took possession of Odessa during the foreign occupation ten years ago. The officers of the invading armies, notably the English, are depicted in colours which may be called severe, but which no one can describe as exaggerated. The various incidents of a tale of adventure which is somewhat melodramatic, but plausible enough in the

setting of the period in question, are presented with a great wealth of detail.

Apart from the two great central Soviet film enterprises, "Meschrabpom" and "Sovkino," there are several film organizations in different republics of the Union. In the Ukraine is "Voufkou," with headquarters at Kiev and branches elsewhere, notably at Odessa. Its director-general is Voroviev. "Voufkou" is an enterprise on a very large scale, and its plant stands first in the U.S.S.R. Its studio and equipment at Kiev are certainly the largest and probably the richest in Europe. I have already spoken to my friends and readers of the latest production of "Voufkou," not yet released—*The Arsenal*, by Dojenko; and I shall not touch further upon this masterly production which gives "Voufkou" a place of honour among the film organizations of the world.

I may mention, however, other films which I have seen before their public presentation. Among them is *Djelma*, the production of a workman whose remarkable gifts have raised him to the position of director, by name Kourdioum. This contains some tragic glimpses of guerrilla war in the Caucasus, and includes a drama, full of tense incidents, of the struggle in the villages between the old traditions of individual cultivation, and the effort of some pioneers to introduce collective farming. This part of it has the same subject as Eisenstein's *The Common Front*.

At Odessa I saw a trade show of *Clown George's Benefit*, which deals in a moving way with an ingenious subject. A clown engaged in the war against the Whites puts his special field of talent, his sleight of

hand and his *tours de force*, at the service of the revolutionary cause. The film ends with a touching apotheosis of this humble soldier, who dies a victim of his own boldness after he has sacrificed everything to the Revolution, including his gifts as conjurer and illusionist. The author of the scenario is Radzinski.

At Tiflis I visited the studio of the film organization of Georgia. This "factory," as they say in the U.S.S.R., is very large, excellently equipped, and provided with the most up-to-date apparatus. From the point of view of technical perfection this studio ranks after that of Kiev, and before those of Moscow. Its director showed me, in one of the offices, two films of a documentary character. One was historical. It recalls the period during which Georgia was in the hands of the Social-Democratic Government (1918–20). A large part of the scenes shown are drawn directly from the stock of topical films "shot" at that date by the Government in question. They present at one and the same time an aspect almost of caricature—notably in connection with the series of fêtes in honour of the officers of the foreign armies of occupation—and a strictly historical character which gives them an intense interest. Combined with some scenes of the war which also took place under the unhappy domination of the Mensheviks, they constitute a piece of propaganda which is very effective in its pure and simple objectivity.

The other film is a series of pictures representing the industrial undertakings, the constructional work of all kinds, and the first steps in mechanized farming which for some time have been transforming the face

of Georgia. This film combines impressiveness with a very high artistic quality. It would be impossible to convey with a more perfected technique or in a more striking fashion all the facets of the labour of economic reconstruction which is being undertaken in Transcaucasia.

Signal progress is registered in all these various productions. The Soviet film has nothing to yield to American and Americo-European productions from the point of view of technique, and it surpasses them from the point of view of the intensity, vitality, and scope of its performances. Eisenstein is going to spend some months in America in order to make a thorough study of American methods, and also to benefit his health by a change of air. Let us make no mistake, however, about his motives. They are simply the curiosity, and the condescension, of a great artist who has nothing to learn. He may in the meantime make an "individualist" film by way of relaxation; but it would only be in order to be better fitted to resume his work on his return a few months hence.

Soviet artists cannot live abroad, nor have they any desire to do so. Poudovkin stayed some time in Berlin, and then returned to Moscow, where he makes a few hundred roubles a month. As an inducement to remain in Germany he was offered a million dollars. Poudovkin refused. There is a small incident which plenty of people in our capitalist countries would regard as an act of heroism!

XV

A VISIT TO CLARA ZETKIN

I WENT to see Clara Zetkin, in the charming spot where she was staying at the moment, on the eve of her seventy-first birthday. It was at a Home of Rest at Archangelskoie, some thirty kilometres from Moscow. A Home of Rest is a home where one can work in peace. As for resting, that depends on your character. It is not reasonable to demand it of Clara Zetkin.

She was sitting at a small table in the open air. The table was covered with papers, on which she had placed stones to keep them from flying away. She was writing. She writes from morning till night. She explained to me that her doctor had forbidden her to walk for more than a quarter of an hour at a time during the day, so that she was compelled to spend the rest of the daytime writing, and that at night she slept badly, so that she had plenty of time to think about what she was going to write the next day.

Nothing about her has changed for years—her rosy complexion, her chubby face, that famous halo of her white hair, or her moving voice. The appearance of this great apostle of the Revolution—one may use the old word "apostle" when it has been endowed with a new meaning—is well known to the working masses of Central Europe and of the U.S.S.R., where last year, on the occasion of the tenth anniversary celebration,

the splendid career of this indomitable militant was crowned by her solemn investiture with the Red Flag. The workers of France also know her by reputation and by sight. Indeed the proletariat of every land holds her to-day in brotherly veneration.

At that moment Clara Zetkin was busy with the organization of the Sixth Congress of the Communist International. When she had finished this work she was going to Moscow, where she proposed to stay for the whole session of the Congress. What was she going to do after that? Many of her friends had advised her to write her memoirs. They would be the whole history of the contemporary wave of revolution, with all its surges, its eddies, and its obstacles thrust aside, as interpreted by the fearless vision of a noble soul. She herself was greatly tempted to do it. But, every time she set about the task, some peremptory obligation of her role as "keeper of the conscience" and inspiring tribune of the people tore her away from it and flung her into the heat of the battle. The proletarian cause has so much need of her that such occasions were many enough.

She had no complaint to make about this. On the contrary, she seeks out for herself opportunities of useful service by way of speech and direct propaganda. Accordingly, after this solemn Congress of which she was to be the soul, she thought—unless her health absolutely prevented her—of going to speak to the German masses, who are full of confidence in her. "There is work to be done there," she told me. That, in her mouth, was as much as to say: "It must be done," and "I will do it."

That sharply whetted and intensely alive spirit of hers takes the keenest interest in every detail of passing events in the great struggle which is now engaged all over the world between reaction, still so powerful and greedy, and the Revolution on the march. Sometimes a memory of the near or more distant past came into her mind. She told me, for example, about the incidents of her last clandestine journey in France, and how, almost by a miracle, she was able to be present at the Congress of Tours. She took no special precautions. She arrived in Paris at the Gare de l'Est without attracting the attention of the police who, having heard about her coming, were on the lookout for her.

"I was not disguised," she said; "I was wearing the dress and the hat that I generally do, and which I am known to wear. I crossed the station-yard sedately, like a good bourgeoise, and took a taxi. Unobtrusiveness and coolness, I believe, throw the police off the scent better than any disguise. Unfortunately the comrades with whom I intended to stay were not at home. That complicated the situation, which became more complicated still when it was a question of getting to Tours and back. I stayed hidden for several days with a comrade in Paris, and left again without any difficulty, to the great annoyance of the detective force, who had sworn to lay hands on me."

I talked with Clara Zetkin about the more intense fight which we were undertaking against international Fascism, about the International Anti-Fascist Committee, and finally about a project on which I was working myself—the organization of a great anti-

Fascist demonstration. She was strongly in favour of this project, which would enable us to centralize our scattered forces and mobilize them more systematically against this scourge.

"We must make a supreme effort against Fascism," said Clara Zetkin. "It is developing everywhere in an alarming way. At the same time we must regard this not as a proof of the strength of the bourgeoisie, but, on the contrary, as a proof of their weakness. The infantry, cavalry, and artillery of which they dispose through their respective Governments apparently do not seem to them adequate for their protection, and so they have recourse to surer forces directly under their own control. It is their last rally, their last throw of the dice, this throwing of bands of brigands into the battle-field of labour, this introduction of the persecutions of the Middle Ages into the social organism."

We talked about many other things: the struggle of yesterday, to-day, and to-morrow, the work and the problems of the M.O.P.R. There is no greater figure among revolutionary leaders than this woman whose whole life is a shining and inspiring example, who seems to draw renewed strength from our need of her at this critical moment of history when we are passing from the old order of things to the new. All of us, proletarians and intellectual revolutionaries, comrades, brothers, or merely sympathizers, owe wholehearted homage to the glorious old age of Clara Zetkin and her eternal and enriching youth.

XVI

SOME REFLECTIONS IN MOSCOW[1]

THE whole world has applauded the skill, the endurance, and the heroism of the men of the *Krassin* and of Tchoukhnovski. So I have myself. I should not trouble the readers of *Izvestia* merely to inform them that I share this universal approbation, if it were not that the stirring events in the Arctic have aroused in me a certain surprise which seems to be worth noting.

I do not mean what you might think. I am not at all surprised myself at the exploits of the Soviet sailors and airmen; but I am surprised at the astonishment which has been intermingled with enthusiasm almost everywhere, and especially in France. The very accents in which this enthusiasm has been expressed have moved me to profound reflection.

The facts, glorious as they may be, are in themselves simple enough. If the expedition of the *Italia* was not conspicuous for its common sense, the rescue of its survivors, in the conditions in which it had to be carried out, was perfectly logical—and, if our comrades rescued others as well, that was perfectly logical too. What does that whirlwind of prowess which the names of Tchoukhnovski, Baboushkin, and Samoloivitch evoke go to show? It goes to show, in the first place, that the Government of the Workers' State has acted

[1] Published as an article in *Izvestia*.

in accordance with the facts of the case; for men who were Soviet soldiers have sacrificed their lives —because there was a work of human solidarity to be accomplished.

Red though they might be, they were not influenced by all the trimmings of glorification, all the theatrical accessories, all the tricks of publicity, with which Imperialism and Fascism chose to invest a Polar expedition. They were not influenced by consideration of those political motives which sent Nobile's expedition into the frozen wastes with every circumstance of haste and negligence. They did not stop to think how far the technical preparation for this hazardous voyage was sacrificed to the urgent necessities of advertisement for Mussolini and Co. by the dropping of the neo-Italian flag on the ice-floes. And they risked death a thousand times to pick up a handful of half-dead men and restore them to life. By bringing back through the air some of these castaways of the sky they have diminished by that number the crimes for which those who initiated or officered the undertaking are responsible.

Their feat, with its calculated audacity, has dumbfounded a part of the old Europe. My poor fellow-countrymen of the West do not realize yet that Soviet soldiers are not soldiers like ours, but soldiers whose business it is to save people; and it is very hard for us in France to accept the fact that the picture of the man with a knife between his teeth is not a photograph.

So we see the newspapers, which are much too servile not to reflect public opinion, exhibiting a stupefied admiration. There was, for example, that great

theatrical newspaper of Paris which, apparently thinking that it could see behind the scenes of the present-day life of the world as well as behind the scenes of the music-halls, wrote as follows: "This fortunate expedition of the *Krassin* has made and will make a very strong impression on the world. May we not see in it the first step towards Russia's restoration to humanity, the return of the Soviet regime to the paths of social feelings and customs?"

This lovely piece of pathos, which would be an outrageous insult to those to whom it is addressed if those who address it did not make themselves so ridiculous, expresses for us the sentiment of a part of the public. "Ah, these Soviet savages are coming back to civilization! They are trying to redeem themselves. They are knuckling down. When they instituted the N.E.P. we thought they might be coming to their senses, but that proved to be a vain hope. Now, however, it will evidently not need so much boldness and courage to visit the U.S.S.R. unescorted, as Madame Andrée Viollis did a year or so ago before she wrote that book with the gallant title: *Alone in Russia!*" The Workers' Government is almost as popular as if it had sold Socialism in the capitalist market-place for the sake of peace.

But the affair of the *Krassin* proves something else besides. It proves that the men in the U.S.S.R. who navigate ice-breakers and pilot aeroplanes are masters of their profession, "aces," and up-to-date heroes; and that they have at their disposal machines and equipment of the first order. It proves that the Soviet flying service is strong and skilled, capable of doing as

well as any other flying service, or even better, in any conceivable circumstances. That also has caused a certain amount of bewilderment. Now that famous public opinion, which is so easily influenced by every gust that blows, and which specializes from time to time in discovering America, has suddenly conceived it to be its duty to discover the new Russia!

This tragic but splendid adventure of airship and aeroplane had to fall out of the sky before people could be brought to realize that in the ex-Empire of the Tsars there are men with both sympathy and brains, technicians who can rise to any emergency, and a great people firmly rooted in their strength. It needed this to make people understand the Red heart of Moscow.

In much the same way it needed the assassination of Matteotti to make people understand that Mussolini was Mussolini. I take Fascism as an example because it is the handiest. For that matter it was Mussolini who started all this business. But the action of the Sovietists in this case has nothing to do with waving the hammer and the sickle by way of counterblast to the brandishing of the Cross and the banner by Nobile. The question of Fascism and Bolshevism will be discussed elsewhere and settled otherwise. In this event itself we have only an example of soldiers who have done their duty like men, and a striking demonstration of Soviet strength and organization.

But beneath the surface there are men who influence newspapers and canalize errant public opinion in the countries under bourgeois dictatorship—a body of men who are beginning to appreciate what the new

continent installed in the old continent really means. For them the story of the *Krassin* and its winged rescuers has nothing of the miraculous about it; it is quite in the natural order of things. And it is this public whose opinion is especially valuable for the fashioning of the future.

XVII

AN INTERVIEW WITH GORKI

IT was the first time that I had seen him. We had sometimes collaborated at a distance, but we only knew each other personally, so to speak, by letter. He came to meet me, and we shook hands and embraced, on the steps of the villa, with its white columns dividing the terrace into alternate lines of the clear light of evening and blue shadows which seemed to have strayed from the great park.

He was staying for a few days at this sometime aristocratic dwelling, now transformed into a Home of Rest, some forty kilometres from Moscow. The villa made a red islet in a sea of green on the slope of a hill. It was large and substantially built, but not a little spoilt by the bad taste of its former proprietor, evidently an admirer of the "modern style," of which there were evidences everywhere.

Here Gorki was resting after the reception given him by the Soviet people, far from whom he had lived for many years. It is difficult to convey any idea abroad of the scope and the mass enthusiasm of this series of welcomes. Moscow was still quivering with the ovations which had been lavished upon the greatest of Russian writers on his return to the fold. His picture was to be seen in every window, hung larger than life-size on a vivid blue ground over arches high as

stage settings, and floated in the wind, with a message of welcome many times repeated, on streamers across the main streets.

Several of us had come to see him together. There was Khalatov, director of the State Publishing Office —the largest publishing house in the world, whose output this year was eighty million volumes. Khalatov had earlier reorganized the railways of the U.S.S.R., and done many other things besides. He has a magnificent Biblical head, with a swarthy complexion and a beard as black as his Armenian eyes, and as the Astrakhan cap and the leather waistcoat in which I always saw him. Then there was Stiepanov-Skvortsov, director of *Izvestia*, a man straight and severe, with the cut of a grenadier and a military collar to match it, a close-shaven face, blue eyes, a fine big moustache and a fine big, earnest voice. Another was Ganietsky, one of the pillars of the Tseka (Central Executive Committee).

All these men are hard workers, who have so many important things to do that one would hesitate to try to enumerate them all. Among us also was Damian Biedny, a huge man with striking eyes—publicist and popular (very popular) poet. "If you knew what he said," a comrade remarked to me enthusiastically, "you would be even sorrier than you are that you don't know Russian." There were several others besides who made a stir on the terrace, walking to and fro when they were on their feet, gesticulating with their arms when they were sitting down—men fond alike of talk and activity, keenly interested in life, like everybody here.

AN INTERVIEW WITH GORKI

My first impression of Gorki, who was sitting opposite me, I may sum up in this naïve statement: He isn't like himself. The appearance of Alexis Maximovitch, or at least his present appearance, is not faithfully represented by his portraits, and is decidedly misrepresented by the photographs of him which compete for custom. He has only a remote likeness to his innumerable likenesses. He is much more refined than his doubles who circulate in the world's newspapers.

He has a long, thin body, which seems to fold up when he sits down. His shoulders are set high upon it at a sharp angle. He has a small head, with fair hair, only just turning grey. His Gallic moustache, blonde and drooping, is certainly the one which so many pictures have made famous; but his face is haggard, thin, and shrunken. His complexion is pale and clear, and the extraordinary luminousness of his blue eyes is quite indescribable.

He does not speak French. He knows just enough to reply "Non" when I put a question to him in French. But he can read it a little. Before we started talking he took the latest issue of *Monde* in his thin, nervous hands, and—after fixing spectacles in front of those wonderful, almost phosphorescent eyes—he ran through it, reading captions and a phrase here and a passage there. He has learned Italian, but I was told that he speaks it pretty badly. His mastery of the Russian language and his originality in it have exhausted his gift of tongues, and left no room for division in this department of his genius.

Then he answered my questions. What was he doing at the moment? It was just a few days' interval;

he was taking a rest and collating his notes. Then he was going to the Ukraine, after that to the Caucasus, and finally to Nijni Novgorod, his native town. Was he writing? Yes, but at the moment only impressions and articles — not books. Was he going back to Sorrento? Yes. Would he come back to the Union for good? Perhaps.

What was his state of mind under the influence of his first impressions? He had been overwhelmed. In Italy, which he had made his domicile for many years, he received plenty of news from Russia. He read the papers, and kept in touch with what was happening. Or rather he thought he knew what was happening; but as a matter of fact he did not. The proof of it was that, when he came back to Russia, everything seemed unfamiliar. When he realized this he kept his eyes wide open, looked about him in all directions, cross-examined all and sundry; he talked to and with everybody he could. The Soviet Press has put on record the keen, and indeed insatiable, curiosity which he showed about everything, every happening or bit of a happening, everybody's views and everybody's opinions. "He looked into everybody's eyes," said Boris Voline in a picturesque but faithfully accurate article which he devoted to the return of this tourist to his own fatherland.

For him, then, the outstanding feature of the Russia of to-day was change—change enormous and profound. Even the settings, the broad outlines of things which do not change, seemed to him other than what they had been. I expressed to him my admiration of the charm and impressiveness of the villages on the way

out from Moscow. The borders of the great highway across the plains expand into a luxuriance of green hundreds of metres deep, and through the foliage, on either side of the road, one sees rows of enclosures and wooden houses, buttressed by rounded oak beams like Swiss chalets, with window frames cut in festoons, and the whole painted white, blue, green, and red—colours as vivid as the head scarfs of the barefoot women and the shirts of the long-booted men. There are occasional churches, mostly painted like the farmsteads; and there are flights of crows—black, with wings outspread like a patch-work of black hands against the sky, or parti-coloured in a coffee suiting fringed with black, which look like sea-mews rather than crows.

"Even the fields and the birds that I knew so well," said Gorki gently, "I could not recognize."

Nor did he recognize Moscow, which he knew equally well. No doubt the aspect of the capital has really changed. Apart from all the rebuilding among rubbish heaps which has been in progress during the past few years, there are now a considerable number of immense new buildings, figures of geometry which have a masterful, machine-like unity, such as the Central Telegraph Office, the House of the Trusts, that of the co-operative society "Mosselprom," the Lenin Institute, the offices of *Izvestia*, and other overgrown architectural blocks of glass and reinforced concrete.

But this was not what Gorki meant when he spoke of change. He might have rediscovered Moscow behind these great architects' designs come to life, but what he could not recognize was the atmosphere, the people, the life. The change presented itself to him in the form

of a rejuvenation. This was the word he kept on repeating, the *leitmotiv* of his sensations of a ghost "revisiting the glimpses." "I arrived in Russia feeling more tired and older than I have ever felt before," he said; "but all that I have seen here has rejuvenated me."

He spoke of "these gallant young faces," of the "independent, self-assured looks" of the new builders (I quote his exact words). He said that he felt himself surrounded by "an atmosphere of energy, of intelligent and inspired creativeness." This youthfulness had affected him. "Their energy is contagious." It was converted in him into enthusiasm and emotion. Sometimes this emotion choked his utterance. He said that he would rather write about all this than speak about it, because in speaking he could not find the right words; his hand was more faithful in interpretation and more apt in delineation than his lips.

It struck him that this people whom he admired and loved, whose breath of life had entered into him, did not realize what they were and what they had done. He appreciated, of course, that when one came from a distance, as he had done, and was suddenly thrown into contact with them in the midst of all the work to which they had put their hands, all that they had achieved, all their disciplined march as an army of labour, one experienced a much stronger impression —but also, he thought, a much truer impression— than if one had been involved in the movement all along.

This emotional reaction of a spirit which knew Russia and the Russians so well, which knows men so well, and which makes its return, not after a lapse of

ages, but after only a few years of absence, is as important as it is inspiring. It goes down to the roots of things. It has nothing in common with the collection of details by those amateurs of the picturesque who come to Russia for the purpose of manufacturing books and adding a new line to their little literary stock-in-trade. Gorki, on the contrary, probes down to the cause itself, its driving force, its line of march, the whole stupendous business. He sees through everything else to the essentials. He sees everything, and he sees all the faults, all the defects; but he is a great man looking at something great, and this is his conclusion: "The Soviet masses in movement are the finest and the most important thing in the world." It is an appreciation which has something of the sweep of history about it.

He spoke of the old man that he was, and that in some respects he still is, and he spoke also of the new man, that "new man," whom one of the most brilliant and most clear-sighted minds, and one of the best workers, of present-day Russia, Lounatcharski, has set himself the task of defining and demonstrating against his appropriate background. The new man, said Gorki, is a man who is "rejuvenated from the inside." We used to talk, and with good reason, about the Russian's "boneless body," and that proverbial expression was a good description of the supineness, the fundamental fatalism, of the Russian, who was nothing but a domesticated animal. But that was a type of yesterday, and it has disappeared.

The new man is a fighter. "He is a storehouse of intellectual energy": he lays hold of knowledge and

—what is more important—the ideas which are the mainspring of his action are clear and well defined. He has developed a social conscience, and an exact idea of his own part in the whole. He works with his head, but also with his heart, in the accomplishment of the Revolution. Revolution has the force of logic, but it must also have moral force working in harmony. It is nourished both by thought and by enthusiasm —the two together, because it is a living force, and life is all one, and cannot be separated into two compartments of head and heart.

These two motives, of course, present marked contrasts. There are sometimes irreconcilable conflicts between men who are ruled by logic and men who are swayed by sentiment. There is even—and this is still worse than divergence—a perpetual misunderstanding between these two categories of men. They seem sometime to think the same thoughts, because they sometimes use the same words; but they mean quite different things. At the present time, when everything is called in question, and one is compelled to probe fundamental problems as deeply as possible, one encounters everywhere traces of this clash between reason and sentiment—which is, as a matter of fact, no other than the famous classic conflict between dreaming and doing, which Hamlet brought to the bar of the public opinion of the world. It is the conflict between theory and practice, between the abstract and the concrete—the conflict, in short, between individualism and discipline.

As a matter of fact there is no real reason for such a conflict. We are presented with two facets of life,

not with two diametrically opposed principles. Either becomes Utopian only when it claims to be exclusive. There must be proportion; and there must also be order of precedence—first logic, and then sentiment; first the plan, and then enthusiasm for it. Neither good will, nor good intentions, nor fervour, nor self-sacrifice suffice to create a new society. To create anything at all one must have a working plan. But enthusiasm, which is only so much driving force run to waste if it is not organized in a doctrine, is not only useful, but may be indispensable, for the accomplishment of a task.

In a labour of revolutionary upbuilding, which began in warfare and with destruction, and continued in struggle and with constructive effort, most people would shrink from measuring how much stress it was necessary to lay upon rigidity in theory and elasticity in practice. Lenin was one of those who did not shrink. One might say that he gave theory and practice a single body, and incorporated the abstract in the concrete. Gorki at one period was somewhat disconcerted by the sheer weight of Lenin. He could not at first see the way clearly. His heart was with the Revolution, but his head did not achieve complete comprehension of it.

A man in revolt rather than a revolutionary, whose genius had been devoted to depicting the ills of poverty and the injustices of exploitation, he was moved to passionate expression of anger, and he seems at one time to have considered that the seizure of power by the slaves of capitalism was a righteous vengeance. That, however, was not the point of view of those who

made the October Revolution. For them it was rather a restoration of equilibrium, the rising of a force natural as a tide, which hitherto had been held back by artificial restrictions, and now resumed its normal form and place.

There are not two Truths. There is only one, which is allied with reality as life is allied with Nature. This Truth, to which one hesitates to give a name for fear that a word should be made an abstract idol, is itself both life and Nature. It can be perceived by sound feeling, as well as by pure reasoning and the scientific point of view. One must aim at a synthesis of these two forces. They must not only exist side by side; they must be organically linked. Where this is not effected, where the internal pressures of these two claims are not adjusted, one is caught as in a vice.

The Tolstoyans, with their sentimental anarchy and their *credo* which they could not exactly limit or canalize as a current of use to humanity, proud and embittered moral lawgivers thrust aside by the every-day struggle, suffered from this defect. They marked time, or fell into pessimism, or clung to the Beyond and gave themselves up to Heavenly spiritism, in the endeavour to find a concrete basis for their idealism which had no basis in the real. The result was that they were more and more left stranded on the banks of the stream of history.

I remember in this connection the struggle in the soul of Anatole France grown old—a crisis in which I played a part to the best of my ability. His extra-ordinary intuition as an artist perceived the imposing outlines of the Russian Revolution. But he lacked

the force necessary to give expression to his astonished admiration. His old habits of thought, the hold upon him of the superficial liberal catechism which he had repeated for more than half a century, paralysed him too much to allow him to hitch his feelings to his vision and go forward.

Gorki has passed beyond this stage. His breadth of humanity and an artistic instinct which is more spacious, more imperious, more compelling, have saved him. Moreover he has always been very close to the Revolution. Now he sees the spirit of Lenin influencing the whole of its life. "If the Russian masses have begun to fulfil their task of renovation and are in course of accomplishing it," he said, "it is because they have followed the spirit of Lenin. Those of us who knew him personally recognize the fact."

Maxim Gorki insisted upon the importance of personality in the new order of things. Communism, far from swallowing it up, has exalted it. "The enemies of Communism claim that complete Socialism creates automatons, people devoid of individuality. On the contrary, everybody here is bubbling over with individuality, burning with it. Nothing has struck me more forcibly than this more intense individuality of the people of the Soviet State. We are witnessing an expansion of personality. Formerly, when they were downtrodden and exploited, people merely whimpered; now everybody talks at the top of his voice."

It was interesting to hear Gorki's opinion of that "self-criticism" about which there is so much talk in Russia at the present time. It is, indeed, a burning

question as the result of the decision of the political leaders to give it the utmost possible scope. He was not wholly in agreement with the propensity of the Soviet militants and leaders for being highly critical of their own work. This applied not so much to the substance as to the form of this criticism. One is accustomed elsewhere to what I may call a division of responsibility; there are those who act, and there are those who criticize. Gorki agreed that the two functions should be organically linked. But he did not approve of the aggressive character which criticism of work, both in theory and in practice, often assumes on Soviet soil, or of the violence of the personal attacks which result when it is everybody's duty to set himself up as a judge.

Already, in his retreat at Sorrento, he had been surprised by the echoes of these embittered disputes. His opinion had not changed since. He recognized that there could be no truckling to certain dangerous tendencies, such as bureaucracy and the revival of old-world taints which cling to us. But, he added, "we must not be intimidated by our defects and our faults. The recognition of them is an integral part of our work; but it is not a reason for getting at loggerheads and fighting with one another. Such virulence of language chills and retards."

He was rather inclined to think that the Russian people under-estimated themselves—or, at least, that they did not fully appreciate all the scope of the social structure which they have rough-hewn. He thought that excessive self-criticism and bitter internal discussions led only to disparagement and made an

unfavourable impression abroad, where opinion is invincibly ignorant of the work accomplished and its methods and its rhythm.

Maxim Gorki has a great project which will shortly take shape: a monthly review, to be entitled *Our Achievements*. This periodical will be purely documentary. One of its objects will be to enlighten ignorant and hostile public opinion; but its main object will be to give all the workers of Russia consciousness of their own achievements. "It seems to me," he said, "indispensable to create an organ which will hold up a mirror to all the manifestations of our work—indispensable because in my opinion we do not yet see with sufficient clarity all that we have done in the U.S.S.R. and in Moscow, where every one actually walks otherwise than he did ten years ago."

We discussed another subject: the new art, proletarian literature, the whole great question of guiding art and social life along the new ways which are henceforth open. I explained to Gorki that one of the objects of *Monde* was to clarify this new means of expression of the new man, of whom he had just said: "Even when he is dealing with little things, he is working at something great."

This new art which will issue out of the peoples themselves and out of the earth itself, through the soil of the fields and the pavements of the cities, will renew the artistic life of humanity by its superabundant health, and by the integrity and the strength of its expression. In the presence of this great wind which is beginning to blow, of this great wave which is beginning to rise from the depths, what will become

of the literature, refined, decadent, and inconsistent, which is now fashionable in our rich but moribund societies? Its products will become merely museum pieces.

I was among those who, with the whole population of Moscow behind us, recently received Bela Kun at the station after his escape from the clutches of the Hungarian Government. I saluted him in the name of the International Bureau of Proletarian Writers, because during the time when he was in power he went out of his way to give ample scope to the art which is rising out of the depths, and waged war upon the bad bourgeois literature which was fashionable there as elsewhere, then as now, and which has all the excesses and all the vices of decadence. We have still to carry on the struggle between the literature which expresses the old order of things and the literature which expresses the new vision of humanity.

Gorki approved highly of this programme, in which he said he would be glad to collaborate. He agreed, of course, that this great campaign which is beginning must be accompanied by a persistent effort aimed at the education, the intellectual enrichment, the documentation of the new soldiers of ideas. For this battle, as for any other, we must be well armed. Gorki asked me in this connection what I thought about the retrospective biographical literature which flourishes so abundantly in France at the moment, and I gave him my opinion.

"In themselves," I said, "these works which are published in such profusion among us are worth exactly what their authors are worth. But this abundance is

a sign of poverty. Bourgeois literature is a literature in decline. It has nothing to say, because it has no controlling idea or ideal. It can only repeat in a more or less perfected way what it has already said, seek new facets of the sentimental egoism which it has so frequently stripped and exposed, and revamp the plots which it has already worked to death. It cannot turn towards the future, which holds nothing for it; so it turns back towards the past and indulges in retrospection. It marks time and turns round."

"That is true," said Gorki; "but at the same time these works are useful from the point of view of documentation, and what we need above all is instruction. There is no doubt, however, that the new people must create their own writers, and they will create them."

He foresaw in the first place, in the days that are coming, a fighting literature. "Literature must be more revolutionary than ever. It must seek out the essential characteristics of the new man, and establish an artistic criticism of actuality. We must pass through the sieve without mercy our present little bourgeois, that most hateful of all types. It makes me angry just to think of them! They are malignant and dangerous, these mean little bourgeois of to-day. They creep into every corner. They are better organized than ever before, and therefore even more noxious than they were in my youth."

With his artistic *flair* he sensed what the revolutionary organizers have seen and provided against by analysis along the lines laid down by Lenin: the obstinate resistance of the *koulak* and the small cultivator, of "that residue, those dregs of the Revolution, who only

want to live well, to sleep well, to eat well, and to devote themselves to their own little pleasures." This same human obstacle looms also on the plane of literature.

"Will you take part in this struggle yourself?"

His reply was somewhat evasive—or, perhaps, dictated simply by modesty. "My work remains that of a writer of my own time and my own generation. We have sung the funeral dirge of a class which is disappearing for ever and driven the nails into its coffin. Ours was the literature of liquidation. There are other forces which are gathering to fight against the *petite bourgeoisie*, and build up the man who marches boldly from to-day to to-morrow. The nucleus is growing. Take the 'working correspondents' whom the great proletarian newspapers are organizing by asking their readers to become contributors. In a very short time they have produced hundreds of journalists and writers of merit. Believe me, in five years the whole of Russian literature will be recruited, and brilliantly recruited, from these working correspondents."

Gorki was insistent, however, upon the necessity of endowing these new-comers with the maximum of culture and making them competent literary technicians. "To put words in their right place and in their right order, to work with that instrument which you dip in ink, you must serve an apprenticeship comparable with that of a smith for working in iron. In the letters which I receive from working correspondents—in Italy I get as many as ten a day—talent is combined with mistakes in spelling. But in a couple of years the signatories of these letters will make

no more mistakes, their talent will be purified, and they will be qualified writers."

Gorki could not say precisely what he was going to do in future. He was certain, however, that he would work in some way for the great community of labour which has been established during the last ten years on the ruins of the Empire of the Tsars. Lenin once said that Gorki, "the greatest representative of proletarian art, who has done so much for it," was destined "to do more one day." The trend and output of his whole working life, and more especially the fund of hope and courage, of knowledge and will, which he has just tapped by renewed contact with his own people, all indicate that Maxim Gorki will devote himself more than ever to aid and enlighten their work.

XVIII

"THE TRUTH ABOUT THE SOVIET"

SOME kind correspondents, in other respects well enough disposed towards me, are offended by the perpetual approval with which I regard the U.S.S.R., and which *Monde* extends to it. "Why," they write, "do you and your colleagues, in writing about the U.S.S.R., do nothing but sing its praises, and never formulate any criticisms?"

These correspondents regard us as prejudiced in our attitude towards this question in which such a large part of the public is so keenly interested. It is hardly likely, they point out, that everything is perfect in the Soviet State, and that there are no criticisms to be made. Let me explain our attitude on this subject once for all, and let me try to clear up any misunderstanding between our readers and ourselves.

We have said this already, and let us repeat it: our attitude towards the U.S.S.R. is not imposed on us by any obligation of principle. If we systematically present a favourable picture of the new nation, this is not at all because we hold that it is our duty to do it by reason of the value and significance which we attach personally to the conceptions on which this new nation is based. Still less are we acting, in this respect, in obedience to any Communist commandment.

The position which we have adopted results from a very simple line of conduct, dictated by common honesty and common sense, and it is, in fact, as we claim, objective. We are agreed that everybody wants to know the truth about the U.S.S.R. But let us be scrupulously careful to state, in all clarity and good faith, the terms on which this curiosity has a right to be satisfied.

The terms are as follows: In October 1917 a proletarian revolution occurred in Russia, succeeding the bourgeois revolution of February, which had overthrown the Tsardom, but had not essentially modified the social and political structure of the former Empire, since power remained in the hands of the same classes. The October Revolution, on the other hand, involved a profound transformation of social relations and values. An enormous adventure, without precedent in history, had begun: for the first time in human annals the working class, the mass of the exploited, seized power. This gigantic undertaking had its birth, and is being pursued, in the midst of struggles and difficulties innumerable with which everybody is now familiar.

Very well; the question, above all, to which world opinion requires an answer is this: Has the October Revolution succeeded, or has it failed? Are the hopes which were aroused when the Russian proletariat rose to its feet, the prospects which it opened up for the masses of the world, mirages—or lies? Has there been in the Soviet country a definite liberation of the slaves of labour, which is an example to others in its development; or are we confronted here with a proof that this conception cannot make good against the capitalist

mechanism which controls the rest of the world? Or again, is what is happening there what happens among us—the fooling of the people behind a theatrical setting of democracy? Yes or No, are the political Revolution and the new order which it has instituted capable of assuring the economic welfare of a vast country? Yes or No, have the Russian workers and peasants restored the productive capacity of the continent whose earlier regime they overthrew—and are they still revolutionaries?

The thirst for knowledge which turns men's minds towards the historic work of the October Revolution is not of the same order as their desire for information about the economic activity of any other region of the world; or, rather, it is not in the same dimension. The fate of a nation (or a federal group of nations) which for the past ten years has stood apart from the rest of the world with Socialism as its only law, and upon which the capitalist conception, elsewhere all-powerful, seeks to impose compromises that would mean the end of it, is something in which the social and political destiny of every country in the world is at stake. But what we are concerned with is wholly a matter of fact. We are not asked for special pleadings, charge-sheets, or even abstract theories, but for a balance-sheet of positive material achievements.

The existence of the Soviet, the organic result of the proletarian Revolution, is nothing else than a spacious and shining example in the great struggle which, at this period in which we live, divides mankind into two opposed camps—the exploited and the exploiters. It is the practical truth which arms or disarms the one

and the other. The concrete fact of the U.S.S.R., and the course of its development, inspire in the most definite way that death-grapple in which Revolution and Reaction are now locked.

To the watching and waiting masses of the world, the events which are happening in the Soviet Continent may prove that a new world is in process of formation, and so incite the international proletariat to have faith in it and aid its creation. Or, on the other hand, these events may demonstrate that this Revolution has failed, and that there is nothing left for the working masses but to hang their heads, accept the old capitalist order, and throw themselves at the feet of the banker, flanked by the general and the priest.

So I come to this essential point: To ascertain whether the vast uprising of a country which has broken all its bonds and entered upon virgin paths is winning or losing, one must consider this country and its contemporary history as a whole and take results as a whole, so as to be able to estimate whether the gains compensate for the losses; whether the profits of the immense adventure balance the disadvantages; whether the nation as a whole is going up or down, prospering or declining. One must reply Yes or No, like a jury, without quibbling.

Such generalization is surely a mere matter of intellectual probity. It is dictated, I repeat, by common sense and ordinary honesty. Somebody once spoke to Clemenceau about the revolutionary Terror of 1793. He replied that the French Revolution must be regarded as an indivisible whole. That remark was the only spark of Marxianism and scientific spirit

with which his admirers can reproach that ferocious old bourgeois.

In what direction, then, is the new Russia moving after twelve years: forwards, or backwards? That, I say again, is the essential question; and the attention of the world is fixed with desperate anxiety upon the answer which experience is able to give to this very simple interrogation. It should be added that it is of vital interest to the Workers' State—which has need of them—that the international proletariats should be very exactly informed upon the phases of the social struggle which it incarnates.

Two flatly contradictory judgments on the economic and social situation of the U.S.S.R. have seen the light. The one exalts it, the other decries it. This is an abnormal and inexplicable fact, for this is a question of positive data, whose interpretation affects the bitterness of the present social struggle, and bears upon the whole conception of the enormous difference which the stability of the Workers' and Peasants' State must make in that struggle. It is also a very grave fact, because there are disparagements which may have disastrous consequences upon international revolutionary development and organization.

There is only one proper attitude. It is to study Soviet realities as meticulously and as scientifically as possible; to form an opinion based entirely upon the most accurate facts and figures—for what we are concerned with above all is realities and facts; and then, with a full sense of responsibility, to circulate that opinion as widely as possible.

That has been our method of procedure. When I

endeavoured to write if not the first, at least one of the first complete histories of Georgia, I based my study squarely upon a number of statistical data—a method for which I was reproached by poor Panait Istrati, who does not seem to me to have brought a very highly developed critical spirit out of his brigand stories. It is only by basing oneself upon figures and matters of fact that one can draw the outline of reality in Time and Space, and make sure that one's observation is not biased by sentiment or ideology.

In the face of the mass of documentary evidence which is piling up every day about the Russia of the Soviets, it becomes increasingly dangerous and ridiculous to call in question its tremendous achievement. The facts are there. The October Revolution has not dishonoured its pledges. Let all who speak about it, therefore, beware of deceiving those who listen to them.

Here I may make a little incursion into the fruitful field of journalistic and literary hypocrisy. I repeat that this war of "revelations"—if I may so describe it —which we are carrying on against one another about the real aspect of the U.S.S.R. ought to be concerned with the whole and not with details; for, by contrast with the whole, details lie. I shall not weary of repeating that it is a question of determining whether the upheaval of a dozen years ago has created a new order of things, or whether it has compromised and retarded the revolutionary cause of the slaves of the world. It is, in these circumstances, an odious business to reply to the peoples' anxious request for a plain Yes or No by exaggerating details and drawing unfair general conclusions; or to let one's conduct of

this inquiry which leads to hope or despair be swayed by one's good or bad temper, by one's short-sightedness, by one's grudges or friendships, or by the production of an effect, the winning of a success, or the gaining of money.[1]

There is a well-known anecdote of the Englishman who, on landing in France, met a red-haired woman, and leapt to the conclusion that all Frenchwomen were red-haired. Not long ago I read a literary essay in which the author, with the patience of an ant, had assembled all the phrases in the works of Flaubert which were grammatically incorrect. He had found some, and he set them down one after the other. The clear implication of the whole collection was that Flaubert could not write good French.

This is the way in which certain anti-Soviet special correspondents and newspapers write history. There is a sheet edited by *emigrés* which claims to report nothing that is not strictly true. The claim is justified —as far as it goes; but, out of the hundreds and thousands of minor happenings in the Union, this sheet extracts nothing but those items which enable a criticism of some kind or another to be levelled against the new Russia. In this way, as nothing is allowed to be printed on the other side, the U.S.S.R. is made to appear as a den exclusively inhabited by criminals. By utilizing nothing but statements veracious in

[1] Let us have no illusions about the results of international counter-revolutionary propaganda. Books favourable to the U.S.S.R. are systematically boycotted, and they will shortly not be able to appear at all. A leading English publisher told me that there was no possibility whatever to-day of publishing in the United States or England a book about the U.S.S.R. which was not hostile to that country.

themselves, hypocrites, traitors, and imbeciles, thus succeed in telling the most preposterous lies. The great newspapers help the good work along by reprinting these calumnies, which unhappy public opinion swallows gratefully.

Every fact ought to be set in its proper place and reduced to its proper proportions in any statement which one makes. In certain circumstances, and in connection with certain subjects, exactitude of scale and nicety of measurement are a necessity which honesty imperiously dictates. That is the rule which guides us when we speak of the new form of society which the Eastern proletariat established in 1917. We are far from denying its insufficiencies, its defects, and its failures. But we do refrain from giving these, by such sleight of hand as the other side employs, an importance which would falsify the truth, mislead public opinion in its exact appreciation of affairs, and discourage the multitude of our comrades.

It is obvious, to take one concrete example, that, even if there is some basis of reality in the faults which are laid at the door of the Soviet bureaucracy, the fact would not imply that social failure which Conservatism and Reaction seek to deduce from it. Any one can see for himself with what glee and gusto anti-revolutionaries make use of such matter of criticism by wrenching it from its setting, isolating it —which is to say, falsifying it. The public lets itself be caught by this game as if by a species of optical illusion. It is by this sort of procedure that a large part of the middle classes and a part of the working class have been alienated from the October creators.

That is how the credulous flock of readers is duped.[1]

Let us not forget that all the enemies of the Russian Revolution make up in fact a united whole, and that, despite the demagogic declarations of some of them, they cannot if they would avoid their dependence upon one another. Some ex-revolutionaries, pretending to be better revolutionaries than the revolutionaries themselves, claim that, if they swell the chorus of reaction against the only revolutionary nation, if they whole-heartedly assist the exploiting classes to attack the liberated proletariat and break the ties which bind it to the proletariats of all other countries, all this is only for the good of the Socialist cause. Simple worker, veteran soldier, be very sure of the fact that this sophistry has only one real result—to add to the rain of stones which falls upon the Red Republic of the masses and swell the chorus of the pack which bays around it.

But if a fundamental examination of the situation in the Soviet country compels us to keep always in view above everything the growing victory of Socialism, that does not mean that we must close our eyes to the defects and the blemishes which result from the application of the system. When they are at work, and when it is not a question of presenting a picture of the whole and of explaining the truth as a whole to their peoples, the Soviet creators criticize themselves with

[1] In the same way, in our old European countries, some partial prosperity, some isolated increase in well-being, should not prevent us from realizing that our present bourgeois regimes, with their arbitrariness and their corruption, their exploitation and their greed, are sliding into the abyss.

merciless severity, and are never satisfied that they have attained their goal. (We have seen how this insatiable strictness shocked Gorki.) They are not at all the kind of people who need to be spurred on by pin-pricks, or who get on better for having mud thrown at them.

In short, the revolutionary and proletarian spirit of Soviet Russia is a fact which one must be stone blind not to see. The impulse which it creates is tremendous. An enthusiasm based on solid foundations infects the whole of the emancipated workers. The centralization, the organization, and the division of labour increase with the multiplication of production. The Five Years' Plan—a plan which no other Power in the world is capable of applying—is in process of realization. At the present moment, at the end of the first year's working of this very ambitious plan, about which I have already spoken, the increase in industrial production, fixed at 21 per cent, has already reached 25 per cent.

The gradual adherence of the peasant masses to collective farming may be slow, but it is undeniable. Individuality is being developed by the consciousness that every one has his useful part in the common work. From the point of view of ideas and art the country, reborn in accordance with a new formula, is advancing with the strides of a giant. It is only when you have said all this that you are entitled, if you will, to add some shadows to the picture. Only in that case are you telling the truth; for these shadows, historically speaking, do not count, and you are not at fault if you do not show them at all.

But let those who serve the cause of mankind without ceasing to respect scientific truth realize how closely they must watch over the Soviet adventure, so that all the various mercenaries and myrmidons of menaced capitalism, by their dishonest tricks of literary juggling, may not misrepresent it in the minds and hearts of the masses. Let the honest worker, who will be a conqueror as soon as he ceases to be a convict, reject with the utmost violence the advances of all the variegated collection of critics and mud-slingers.

All these adversaries are more or less cynical and more or less treacherous. Their attacks, their insinuations, and their reservations either neglect to paint the picture as a whole, or attempt to make the present leaders of the Revolution on the march responsible for the obstacles which a Socialist State in process of realization must inevitably encounter in a capitalist world. They have no object except to undermine the work which has been so heroically built up, and to lay snares in the path of the World Revolution.

The whole explanation of our alleged partiality is that it is merely a matter of giving just measure.

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