

My Lives in Russia

Markoosha Fischer

1944

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This book is complete and unabridged in contents, and is manufactured in strict conformity with Government regulations for saving paper.
To my sons and their young friends.

Chapter 1

This is the story of my first trip to Soviet Russia in 1922 and of the twelve years I lived there between 1927 and 1939.

I was born in Russia and went to a czarist school at the beginning of the century. There I saw the unhappiness which social injustice and racial discrimination bring to children. My father, a true humanitarian, taught me to see this and never to forget it.

The Russian revolution of 1905 came close to our doorstep. My older sister had joined a Socialist group, and one night, after a thorough search of our entire house, she was taken away to prison by gendarmes. Having lost one daughter to the revolution, my mother doubled her efforts to make a lady instead of a revolutionist out of me. I was sent to study music at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, then to a finishing school in Switzerland. Subsequently, I entered the University of Lausanne where I majored in French.

In Switzerland I met many Russian revolutionary leaders who had sought refuge there from czarism. I deeply admired them. Once in a state of bliss I stood nailed to the spot watching Lenin and his wife debate at a Geneva bookstore window whether to buy a new or a secondhand French dictionary.

I did not understand theories and was unable to see my way through the fine theoretical differences that separated the many parties and factions. I never joined any of them but my sympathies were with all of them who wanted to free Russia from czarist tyranny and to eliminate injustice and poverty in the world.

I always loved Russia, its pine and birch forests, its people, its poets and songs. But czarism repelled me and I preferred to live outside of Russia. At the outbreak of the First World War, however, my patriotism was aroused and, czarism or no czarism, I wanted to be in Russia in the hour of her distress. I went to Riga and then to Petrograd. I helped to take care of the huge flow of refugees fleeing from the advancing Germans or mercilessly driven from the war zone by the Russian authorities, and I worked as a proofreader on a newspaper. Yet despite my patriotic feelings the indignities to which czarist oppression and absolutism subjected people haunted me. After a year I was unable to stand the ugly atmosphere and went to neutral Copenhagen. When I crossed the Russian border in the fall of 1915, I looked back and made a solemn vow not to set foot on Russian soil as long as czarism ruled. I was sad; at that moment I was sure I would never see Russia again.

My first job in Copenhagen was in the Danish Red Cross taking care of the correspondence of German and Russian war prisoners. In tear-stained scraps of paper and in official notifications of dead and missing, the horrors and heart-wringing tragedies

of war were brought very close to me. My next job as a translator in a large Danish electrical firm revealed another and very sordid aspect of the war to me. Neutral Scandinavia throbbed with the bustling activities of people of all nationalities eager to make quick, easy money on the war. National boundaries were ignored in the mad dance around Moloch. German manufacturers sold arms to the Russians, and French manufacturers sold to Germans. Fabulous fortunes were made in a day.

I enjoyed living in beautiful Copenhagen among the friendly lighthearted Danes. But when I was asked to go as a pianist with a group of young Russian musicians leaving for a tour of the United States, I excitedly packed my bags again, thrilled at the idea of seeing America. A couple of months after my arrival there, in the midst of our concert tour, came the news of the overthrow of the czar in February, 1917. I was filled with deep joy. I was intensely eager to return to Russia. But the war interfered.

I settled in New York and, having definitely convinced myself that I was not a good pianist, turned to less glamorous jobs. I translated for an encyclopedia. I typed for the Railroad Mission which the Russian Premier Kerensky had sent to the United States to purchase rolling stock. I studied farming at Cornell. I compiled a bibliography on the economic development of Palestine. I was secretary to the Russian Red Cross representative, David Dubrovsky.

In spring, 1921, Dubrovsky was called to Moscow for a conference and I decided to go with him. I was sorry to leave New York. I had made many friends during my four years there. The most important of all was my future husband, Louis Fischer, a young Philadelphian, who then was trying to make up his mind which of the two—economics or forestry—was to be his lifework. He became a foreign correspondent.

Life was pleasant and stimulating in New York and there was no need to go abroad for anything better. But I still loved Russia, and Moscow exercised an attraction on me that was stronger than anything in my personal life. Above all, I hoped to find justice in this world and the end of misery. I had lived in countries that were considered advanced and democratic—Scandinavia, Switzerland, America. But even there I had seen a great deal of intolerance, discrimination, and poverty. I was depressed by the contrast between luxurious palaces and destitute hovels, by women laden with diamonds passing half-starved children. Russia had proclaimed its intention to banish this. I wanted to see it.

But I did not get into Russia then. When our group, which also included Lincoln Steffens and Jo Davidson, applied from Stockholm for visas to Russia, Dubrovsky was the only one to receive his. The others were told that at the moment only people whose services were vitally important for the Soviet government were welcome in Russia.

I went to Berlin to work for my old boss of the Railroad Mission in New York, Professor George Lomonossov, one of Russia's great railroad experts. He was supervising the building of German and Swedish locomotives for the Soviet government.

In December, 1921, Louis came to Berlin on his first modest journalistic assignment and with great pleasure I introduced him to European life.

In April, 1922, one of the most exciting events of my life took place. Professor Lomonossov, upon Maxim Litvinov's request, lent me to the Soviet delegation going to the Genoa conference. I am unable to think of this conference as of a place where shrewd politicians bargained and fought around oil and war debts. Being the only one on the staff who knew several foreign languages, I was present at most sessions and secret conversations, and saw highly confidential documents. But I never really understood the meaning of the talks. Years later, Louis once asked Soviet Ambassador Krestinsky some questions about the Genoa conference.

"Why don't you ask your wife?" Krestinsky said, "she was present at most of the negotiations."

Louis could not very well admit that I was unable to enlighten him. He said I did not feel free to talk. But though I did not understand the words, I understood the spirit. I knew that Soviet Russia was fighting in Genoa for her very existence. She had against her extremely polite, well-mannered enemies, who, having failed to cut her throat with a knife, now tried to choke her to death in an iron economic grip.

To me the Soviet delegates stood on a high pedestal. I saw in them the embodiment of all the hopes of an unhappy post-war world. When the Soviet delegates walked in the streets of Genoa, the eyes of the Italian workers reflected these hopes. So did the modest gifts which Italians and others in Italy sent to the delegation: field flowers, baskets of fruit, home-made cake, etc.

In the beginning the presence of men like Chicherin, Litvinov, Krassin, Rakovsky filled me with breathless awe, and every member of the Soviet delegation, including the youngest messenger boy, seemed to be slightly more than mortal. I was relieved to discover that they possessed the qualities and weaknesses of all normal people. Dreaded conspirators loved to show family snap shots. They flirted and they fussed over a boiled egg. They sang sentimental songs and competed in buying presents for their wives. We had parties where Foreign Commissar Chicherin composed on the piano, where Litvinov entertained us with clever jokes or a fist fight with a fellow delegate, and where Krassin directed a chorus. All displayed great skill in folk dancing.

After the conference I returned to my desk in Lomonossov's Berlin office where a few weeks later I was informed that Litvinov wanted me to go with the Soviet delegation to a new international conference in The Hague. There was little of the exaltation and charm of Genoa in the economic deliberations at this second conference or in the quiet life of the Soviet delegation.

After my return from The Hague I went with Professor Lomonossov on an inspection tour to Sweden to visit the plants which were building locomotives for Soviet Russia. Lomonossov "With a group of German and Swedish engineers were going to take a shipment of locomotives to Russia for a month's tests. Immeasurable was my joy when Lomonossov told me that I was to accompany the group. A few weeks earlier Louis had gone to Russia as a free-lance correspondent of the New York Evening Post. His presence there was an additional attraction to a trip which was the fulfillment of my dreams.

Here begins the story of this book. It is a story of hopes and joys. It is also a story of shattered hopes and hardships and sorrows. I left Russia in 1939 with great pain in my heart, and it was with great pain that I wrote this book. I did not write it because I wanted to discredit a brave ally or bring disunity among the United Nations or give comfort to the enemy. I had another reason for writing it.

There is too much ignorance and confusion as well as deliberate insincerity and passionate blindness in discussions about Russia. Fellow travelers who see only white, Soviet enemies who see only black, and the numerous visitors who lacked the necessary background and language have given the world a distorted and very incomplete picture of Soviet Russia. My story is also only a part of the whole picture. It is the life of our family, of our friends and neighbors. But I knew the people and their language, and was part of them, and I have tried to be truthful in every one of my words.

Nothing but the truth about Russia can restore honest, clear thinking about that country and give us an understanding of Russia's role in the future. I understand the feelings of those who regard the Soviet Union as the only solution of the evils in the world. But they, especially the young people, in whose hands the future lies, ought to know that besides the good aspects of Russian life—human equality, economic progress without exploitation, education of the masses, social security, lack of racial discrimination—there are also suppression of freedom, regimentation of spirit, and political terror. In planning and working for a new world, they must be aware of the danger of trying to achieve quick material gains only to neglect what is at least as important—spiritual and moral values.

Some may ignore Russia's shortcomings because they adore her virtues. Others may prefer personal freedom to everything else. They are entitled to a choice after they know the truth. But the choice now is only between black and white, and neither of these is correct.

I lived the life of a Soviet Russian. I shared the hardships and the pleasures of life. I rejoiced and suffered with my fellow Russians. I think I know what makes Russia a live, rich, palpitating reality that can cry, laugh, fight, sing, and suffer.

If this book helps to end the name-calling that is part of all current discussions of Russia, if it shows that there is good in Russia and bad in Russia, and that we may admire the good and beware of the bad—I will not regret the heartache with which I wrote these pages.

Chapter 2

I CAUGHT my first glimpse of Soviet Russia late one night in September, 1922. I entered Russia in a splendor too rich for my taste. The Lomonossov party was met at the border by a special train with luxurious sleepers and an observation car which soon became a busy office. My compartment, decorated with cupids and silk brocade, used to be the maidenly boudoir of one of the czar's daughters. The stations we passed were filthy. The guards and officials were dressed in coarse, untidy uniforms. People looked grim and ragged. The roads were deep in mud. Endless grayness and poverty met us everywhere. By the end of October the test rides in the snowy north with its thousand frozen lakes were finished, and Lomonossov and the engineers went back to Berlin and Stockholm. I remained in Moscow. I stayed at the Savoy Hotel, where Louis and most foreigners lived.

This was a confused period in Soviet life. The New Economic Policy or NEP, Lenin's compromise with capitalism, had taken over. Private trade was permitted again in Bolshevik Russia; foreign capital could again reach out for Russia's natural resources. The Soviet government regarded the NEP as a temporary but unavoidable retreat from its most fundamental principle—abolition of private property. It was a painful step for Bolsheviks to take. Preceding this step were months of fierce open fighting within the Communist party, months of explaining and pleading to make it palatable to its own members.

Before the NEP—from 1917 to 1921—everybody was hungry, cold, and poor. All received the same meager rations of food and fuel, and a rich supply of theater tickets. Money did not matter; some said it would be abolished. Everybody suffered. But those who believed in the revolution suffered with exaltation. They were sacrificing themselves in order to rebuild the world. After the NEP, equal distribution ceased. Those who were either unwilling or unable to jump on the band wagon of the new prosperity continued to be cold and hungry. But the new rich could frequent expensive food stores, restaurants with gypsy singers, and government-run night gambling clubs.

Economic reconstruction had the first claim upon the meager financial resources of the country. The startling innovations in the fields of education and arts of which Soviet Russia was so proud in her days of infancy felt the hard blow of NEP and, to the chagrin of millions, were greatly curtailed.

It was hard enough for adults; youth was thoroughly bewildered. After years of tremendous nervous tension, after having seen the doors open to the socialistic paradise, after the glory of military victory in the civil war of 1918-1920, the sudden concessions to capitalism shook the spirit of the young. NEP brought unemployment. In order to

become self-supporting, enterprises reduced the number of workers and got rid in the first place of young people without practical experience.

The revolution had destroyed the old accepted rules of behavior and had had no time to create new ones. There was a great deal of anarchy in personal relations, especially in sex relations. Some sought refuge in drink. Others succumbed to the lure of NEP joys. If the dreams of socialism were going up in smoke, why not take what life had to offer? The older generation was of little help. Authority was a notion which, along with many others, was lost somewhere in the turmoil of revolution. Besides, the older folks were confused too. A wave of suicides swept the ranks of youth.

Youth's morale became a serious concern of the Bolshevik leaders. Krupskaya, Lenin's wife, Bukharin, and Trotsky felt most keenly that youth had to be helped in its transition from revolutionary heroism to practical duties. Trotsky was the idol of the new generation. I once attended a youth meeting where he spoke. He pictured the present in black colors. But he told them that they were the masters of the future. He spoke of the ugliness of the old world and of a radiant future which it was in their power to build. He used burning words and poetic images. Two years earlier they had thrown themselves fearlessly against a much more powerful enemy when he spoke to them at the front. Now he fired their imagination and gave them a vision of a perfect world to sustain them in their cold and hungry existence at factory benches, in laboratories, offices, and schools.

Trotsky was not only the idol of youth. The Red Army which he had helped to create also worshiped him. It was for me a constant source of joy to see Russian soldiers—^who, in czarist times, were sullen pitiful human dregs—^walk around with happy, friendly faces that won the love and respect of the population. In a Moscow handicraft shop I once asked for toy soldiers. A Red Army commander overheard and gently censured me: "Do not call a Red Army man a soldier." The contempt for czarist soldiers was still deeply rooted.

Late in 1922, while I was in Moscow, Lenin emerged from a serious illness. Numerous messages of greeting and good wishes poured in on him from all over the country; they were written in simple words and printed in small type in a corner of the newspapers. But they unmistakably showed the deep affection which the people had for him. On a visit to a glass factory, I came upon an old worker who had just returned from seeing Lenin. The old man had been delegated by the factory to present Lenin with a tea set and ask his permission to name the factory for him. Lenin patted him on the shoulder, pulled up a chair, offered him tea, and made him feel thoroughly at home. He wanted to know all about the factory, how the workers fared before the revolution and what they did during the civil war and now. No detail was too small for him. The old man could not get over his visit and kept on repeating: "Ilyich looks and talks exactly like one of us."

My hunger for good theater was amply satisfied in Moscow. There was a tremendous variety of theaters. All were crowded, whether classical, drama, or ballet, old-fashioned French vaudeville, experimental groups calling themselves "laboratories," old and new

musical comedies, or any other of the many theaters which broke away from the old and tried, each in its own way, to create new forms. Workers' clubs and Red Army units had their own amateur theaters, some on a high professional level.

Around the theaters, as well as around music, movies, painting, or any other expression of art, raged endless public discussions. The new and the old fought fiercely with each other. These discussions, as well as all other public debates or lectures, invariably attracted large crowds. The thirst for knowledge and intelligent entertainment was immense. These gatherings frequently lasted until well after midnight. It was not out of love for late hours. In these heated debates Russians were struggling to see their way clear through the multitude of new ideas and situations which the revolution had created.

In later years one heard it said that those poor devils, the Russians, must have some kind of "little father" to tell them what to do because they were never trained to think independently. But in the early years of the Bolshevik revolution, when for the first time in history, and for a brief period, they were given the opportunity of talking and thinking, they did a good deal of it.

The Soviets proudly called themselves a dictatorship of the proletariat and a one-party regime. Members of the Communist party were free openly to express their disagreement with the current party line. The party line at that time concerned itself only with political and economic activities and covered few other phases of life. Literary, scientific, and art publications freely debated old and new trends. They also carried news from all over the world, and printed reviews of books unfriendly to the Soviet regime. Like the theaters, the books and magazines reflected the same avidity for new ideas and forms. And irrespective of the contents, every printed word—old classics and modernistic poets, detective stories and history books, newspapers and scientific magazines—was devoured by the millions of new readers.

There was little conformity in Russian thinking in 1922. Sitting around a friendly tea table we would hear one person praise Bolshevism to the skies for having opened the doors of schools to everyone. Another would see in it the end of the world because scholastic standards were lowered to the level of "cooks' children." One hailed the easy divorce laws as the liberation of the Russian woman from her chains, another branded it as low morals." One would have burned every word printed before November, 1917, another would destroy whatever appeared after that date. Some would demand in the new human being purity and decency. Others would scoff at these outmoded words. Some wanted to strengthen the revolution by abolishing the opera, or by nationalizing children, or by prohibiting handshaking and swearing.

Those in favor of the revolution could be critical of some of its aspects and express their views in private and in public. The anti-Bolsheviks had only the privacy of their homes in which to express their disgust with the regime and their hope for its overthrow. To them the introduction of the NEP was a renewal of hope.

We spent an evening with an old professor's family. After the revolution, all Moscow housing space was redistributed, and large apartments had to provide living space for

those who had little or none. The professor was given two rooms in his former seven-room apartment. They were overcrowded. I asked the professor's wife why she did not get rid of some of her furniture the way so many others did when they had to move into smaller quarters. "I was ready to do it some time ago. But not now. The way things look, who knows, I may soon have my apartment back." They and many like them abhorred the Nepmen, the *nouvemx riches* who fattened on the misery of others. But if the NEP meant a step toward the "good old days" for which they fervently prayed, they welcomed it.

The high spot of my first visit to Soviet Russia in 1922 was the annual parade on November 7, the anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution. With Louis, I could have watched the demonstration on the Red Square from the grandstand reserved for special guests. But I preferred to march with the crowd and did not regret it. The demonstration moved slowly and stopped frequently for long periods. The stops were filled with dancing, singing, games, laughing, and cheering. There was genuine rejoicing over the fifth anniversary of the revolution. The Russians were still startled by the miracle that their revolution had survived. The Soviet leaders on the platform and the marching crowd exchanged hearty, witty greetings instead of the formal, prescribed slogans of later years. It was a real holiday. The people were celebrating their victory over the dark past of Russia. They rejoiced in the promises—as yet unfulfilled—of the revolution. Life was hope.

My personal life also took a turn. I got married in Moscow. The ceremony consisted of a visit with Louis to the famous Moscow "Zags," the Marriage Bureau. The Zags was then housed in a gloomy, low-ceilinged room near the Hotel Savoy. It had four untidy desks with hardly noticeable signs over each: Marriage, Divorce, Births, Death. The close proximity of these tables was rather ominous. Large posters illustrating the dangers of syphilis and drunkenness added to the somber atmosphere. But we and our two witnesses were in high spirits befitting the occasion. The clerk looked at us with amazement. We understood his amazement when after a few preliminary questions he asked: "Why do you want to get divorced?" (quickly adding that this question was only for the statistical record). In our excitement, we had gone to the wrong table.

Before I went to Russia, I was often disturbed by stories of the persecution of Soviet writers, scientists, historians, and other intellectuals. In Berlin I had read tales about the destruction of culture and science in the new regime. So now I spent a great deal of time in Soviet palaces and museums. I found them intact and cared for with great love by the authorities and visitors. I found many intellectuals sabotaging the efforts of the young republic. I had the impression of an age-old hard crust of soil being cracked open by forces struggling hard toward light and sun—[^]toward education and knowledge. I found a ruined, backward country striving up to dazzling heights of freedom and culture hampered in the struggle by the privileged of a former day who considered themselves the chosen of the earth.

Between 1914 and 1919, in belligerent as well as neutral countries, I had often heard criticism of one nation or the other. But with a few honorable exceptions, I had never

felt a general outburst of indignation against war methods. It seemed acceptable for nations proud of their civilization to kill and cripple millions of young people, to destroy cultural and moral values, and to wreck homes in order to acquire territory and markets, to gain power, to satisfy ambitions, and whatever else wars were fought for. But the attempt of the Soviet republic to eliminate economic and social injustice and to build a new life based on freedom and equality was met by the civilized world with a storm of abuse. The millions of fresh war graves, the burned homes, and the broken hearts of mothers, widows, and orphans were quickly forgotten. But factories expropriated, land turned over to the people, active enemies shot, palaces converted into homes for underfed children, reactionary professors and Mensheviks exiled abroad—this made the world fume. People aspiring to happiness were called barbarians, tyrants, savages, monsters, vandals.

Some stories told by Soviet Russia's enemies were correct. They saw destruction. I saw it too. They saw dirt, ugliness, and brutality. I saw it too. But I also saw a magnificent edifice emerging from the battle. The most exquisite cathedral is born in ugliness: Human sweat, piles of rubbish and junk cover the site of future beauty. Man, the king of creation, comes into the world in all the ugliness and pain of birth. I did not expect the birth of new society emerging against the resistance of all the powerful of this world to be something like Venus coming out of the foamy waves, all pink, lovely, and peaceful.

I had found in Russia the one place in the world where there was struggle and hope for a better future. I wanted to be part of it. But one day an insignificant incident changed everything.

Walking on Kuznetsky Most I noticed a familiar face. It was Petrovsky, a member of the Hague conference delegation. He did not see me. No inner voice told me not to stop. I called his name. His face expressed a pleasant surprise: "Well, where do you come from? We were looking for you all over Europe." He was working with Chicherin on the preparations for the Near East conference in Lausanne which was to open next week. Chicherin wanted me to come along. I told Petrovsky that I had not the slightest intention of going to any more international conferences, that I was through with life abroad and that I was going to stay right here in Moscow. He smiled and said nothing. Next morning Chicherin called me. That cold, ascetic foreign commissar who hardly ever addressed a personal word to any of his staff, especially women, had an angel's voice and smile when he wanted to get something out of them. Well, he persuaded me to go to the Lausanne conference. I was to leave Moscow in two days. I cried when I told Louis the news. But I was unable to resist Chicherin.

My heart and thoughts were in Moscow, and the Near East conference about Turkey, with its whirl of Eastern and Western faces, languages, and intrigues, interested me little. By the time the Lausanne meeting ended, I was unable to return with the delegation to Moscow. I had lost the chance I had to get a suitable room in Moscow. I expected a child and it would have been impossible for all of us to live and work in one

small Moscow hotel room. With a heavy heart I settled down in Berhn. Louis came for occasional visits from Moscow.

Within the next two years, in 1923 and 1924, our two boys, Yura and Vitya, were born. I returned to my old job in Lomonossov's Railroad Mission. It was not easy to combine the two babies and a full-time job. But I always believed in my economic independence, and besides I did not want to interfere with Louis's budding career as a journalist.

Lenin's death in February, 1924, was the one event which deeply shook me during a period when few outside events disturbed my life devoted entirely to family and office. I attended the Lenin memorial meeting in the Berlin Soviet embassy. The Soviet ambassador in Berlin, Nikolai Krestinsky, shot later during the purge, was not able to say more than a few words before he broke down and cried. None of the other speakers was able to finish his speech. Lenin had been loved by the Russians as few people are ever loved. When he died, Russia was stunned. With many it was the fear that the young republic would not be able to survive the terrific blow. But with most people it was the pain of an irreparable personal loss. In my later years in the Soviet Union I heard again and again young and old alike deplore Lenin's death and tell how it seemed to them that on that day the whole world grew darker.

As soon as Vitya was out of his infancy I tried hard to go back to Moscow. I was offered many jobs there but none of them could provide me with living quarters. I finally gave up all hope of getting to Soviet Russia until the housing situation there had improved. But in the beginning of 1927, Dr. Joseph A. Rosen, then director of the Agrojoint, a branch of the American Joint Distribution Committee, offered to send me to the new Jewish colonies which had been established in the Ukraine and the Crimea. I readily accepted this opportunity to return to Soviet Russia. In March, 1927, I saw Moscow again.

Chapter 3

From time immemorial Russians have found delight in discussions. In 1922 I had been regaled with no end of passionate arguments, and very frugal teas. In 1927 the conversations in the average family were still plentiful but less violent. The Moscow tea table—the truest reflection of Soviet economic conditions—^was now lavishly set with jams, cakes, sandwiches. It was mainly in this informal, pleasant setting that I became reacquainted with Russia.

People delighted in comparing the hungry years immediately after the 1917 revolution with the plenty of 1927, and the ruined factory of yesterday with the running plant of today. It gave them true joy to tell about a newly opened wing of a factory, a freshly painted office room, classrooms added to a school, or a new shoe counter in a department store. Abroad, when visiting friends, we talked about books, theaters, and politics or we engaged in friendly gossip. Russians preferred to talk about their daily work. Shop talk was life talk. Their jobs did not simply provide them with the means to support their families. Through their jobs they were building a new world. A friend of ours, a venereologist, was not just curing patients. With other young doctors he voluntarily visited the most godforsaken corners of Russia. They unearthed villages entirely overrun by syphilis, and they did what they could to cure them. The Soviet government was doing splendid work in this field.

An opera singer I met was not only singing. He spent his vacations tramping through the countryside collecting folk tunes. Whenever he was free from his professional duties, he went to Red Army camps, workers' clubs, schools, and taught people the old tunes. He also collected *chastushki* (limericks), always an accurate expression of Russia's popular mood. Before the revolution Russians used them to disguise their contempt for the czar, the police, the landlord, or the greedy priest. Now they sang about a speech of Austen Chamberlain, a local boy-meets-girl story, the death of Lenin, the faithlessness of men, and the despised *Nepman*. The favorite theme was the crowded apartments:

In Moscow we live as freely as a corpse in his coffin.

I sleep with my wife in the dresser.

My mother-in-law sleeps in the sink.

A woman working in a children's home had seen the beginning of this home—a windowless shack into which were brought the dreaded waifs, infested with lice, syphilis, tuberculosis, and trachoma, hiding Finnish knives under their rags. Now the same boys who had stolen whatever they could lay their hands on—electric bulbs or the teachers' shoes—^were helping to run the well-built home as instructors in the workshops, as

cooks, gardeners, and carpenters. For the woman working there it was not a job, it was her life.

A young official of the Komsomol (the Young Communist League) was not a mere paid employee of a political organization. He considered whatever happened in the country as his own business. His organization then was not the mechanical copy of the adult Communist party which it became in later years. It had an individuality of its own and was an organization of hot-blooded, militant youth. It frequently fought for higher health standards in Russia. For instance, its members vigorously opposed the decision of the government to build margarine factories. They insisted instead on enlarging dairy production. They won. Their newspaper printed 107 recipes for cooking potatoes. They fought against alcohol, against lice and bedbugs, for cleanliness in factory kitchens, for a decrease in the cost of living.

There was plenty of criticism in Soviet Russia in 1927. People spoke up plainly. The bitterest complaints were about bureaucracy. The innumerable documents, all duly signed and stamped, needed for every detail of life were then and remain one of the worst curses of Soviet life. Every word had to be proved by a written document. This distrust of human decency and honesty was a heritage of czarist Russia; Soviet bureaucracy reinforced it. Legislation was based on the presumption that a man is guilty unless he can prove his innocence. ‘Trove that you are not a camel,’ goes an old Russian saying.

The boundless enthusiasm of many Soviet citizens was often paralyzed by this bureaucracy. I was told the tragic tale of a Siberian nursery for sables and foxes. A group of enthusiastic scientists had built up this nursery under great hardships. They successfully carried out unique experiments in crossbreeding. From all over the world offers came to buy the animals at any price.

The nursery could have become a source of precious foreign currency to the Soviet government at a moment when it was badly needed. But the scientists ran out of funds and asked Moscow for assistance. It took several months of tedious correspondence before Moscow responded. By that time most of the precious animals had died of starvation. This is one example out of many

In 1927 I began to notice considerable pressure to force Soviet thinking to conform with the current party line. Books and plays were reviewed not so much according to their literary value but according to whether they agreed with the official party line. Some of the literary critics were still independent enough in spirit to fight the conversion of Soviet literature into a gray servile reflection of current political slogans. But the number was small.

In 1922 physical conditions had been hard; life was gray. But the spirit was bright and colorful. Now in 1927 the sparkle of life was disappearing. The beginning of spiritual conformity was making itself felt.

In 1927, according to the phrase coined by Bukharin the “cultural revolution knocked at our door.” The government felt that socialism could only be established by an enlightened people. The entire country had to be raised to a higher standard.

But the maltreated word “culture” has many meanings in the Soviet Union. It could mean anything: not to spit on the floor, to visit museums, the four R’s, take off your hat before entering a room, wash your hands before a meal, bathe regularly, flowers in a window box, a tie, a daily shave, a permanent wave, polished shoes, white bread instead of black bread, clean bed sheets, etc.

I stayed a few weeks in Moscow, then went on, full of eagerness, to my “cultural” job in the Ukraine.

Chapter 4

I WENT to the colonies without a definite plan for work. But I soon found a task which was close to my heart: work with women and children.

Before the 1917 revolution, Jews in Russia were not permitted to own land and could not live in large cities unless they were rich merchants, skilled artisans, or professional people. Those groups constituted only a small percentage of Russian Jewry. The majority of Jews lived in overcrowded small towns with little opportunity for a decent living. The Soviet revolution abolished all restrictions for racial minorities. But the Soviet government was unable to provide jobs for those people whose meager income until then had been derived, out of necessity, from petty retail selling. Beginning in 1921, the NEP called Jews back to private trade. However, tens of thousands remained without work. Industry was still crippled. To settle the former Jewish merchants on the land required means which the Soviet government did not possess. Help came from the United States. The Joint Distribution Committee gave the necessary money and agricultural machinery while the Soviet government supplied the land and transportation facilities.

It was hard for the small-town people to accustom themselves to the hard physical life of peasants. The women's burden was especially heavy. They often cried while milking their cows. These were not merely the tears of a difficult adjustment process. Many felt it degrading to be a peasant woman. In pre-revolutionary Russia they had been taught to consider the peasant as a low human species. If the new settlement project was to be a success, something had to be done to ease the women's life. The way to a woman's heart through her children is the same all over the world. We opened a dozen kindergartens and provided healthy hot meals for school children in several villages within a radius of about thirty-five miles.

The colony in which I settled was in the open steppes with not a single tree for miles around. It was freezing cold in the winter and mercilessly hot in the summer. The houses had clay walls which required frequent whitewashing. Lumber was rare in the treeless steppe, and the floors were made of loam. A young peasant girl, Natasha, helped me in the household. I possessed hardly any furniture except beds, but the local co-operative store gave me a few wooden boxes. Ukrainians are very clean and artistically inclined. Natasha painted the boxes white, covered them with her favorite designs of birds and flowers, and we used them as chairs. She painted the same birds and flowers on the walls, and after every whitewashing painted them anew. It took our boys a while to get used to the huge kitchen stove which burned bamboo, to water fetched from a well, and to kerosene lamps. After several serious illnesses they also

got accustomed to the coarse, monotonous village food which replaced the scientifically planned and prepared diet they had had in Berlin. They attended the village kindergarten and quickly became full-fledged members of the younger set.

It was a difficult job to provide food for hundreds of kindergarten and school children amidst the dire scarcity which prevailed in the district as a result of a second successive drought. Not less strenuous was the constant traveling from one colony to another over bad, muddy roads in primitive horse carts. But the results of the work were worth any hardship. Without our help the children we took care of would have had little to eat. And they spent happy days singing and playing in clean airy rooms, instead of in muddy or dusty streets. The mothers' morale improved quickly.

We tried to raise the culture of the parents through the children. It was amazing how small children were able to change life at home. They demanded and were granted their own towels, their own plates, and their own place to sleep with personal bed clothing, all of which many had never had at home before. They insisted on clean handkerchiefs and aprons. They lectured their elders for starting a meal with unwashed hands or for entering the house without wiping the mud off their shoes. This method was successfully used in all Soviet kindergartens and schools, especially in the rural districts where, before the revolution, people had been taught little about personal hygiene and sanitation.

My friends were the village intelligentsia—the teacher, the agricultural expert, doctor, nurse, veterinarian, and a few younger settlers. It was a lively crowd enthusiastically devoted to their work. We used to meet in the home of one of us or in the house of the village Soviet, where the chairman, a gentle hard-working peasant with a Christ head, played host. We treated ourselves to our only luxuries, sunflower seeds and watermelons—both grew in the backyards—and to a lot of talking and singing. The stillness of the steppe was often disturbed by a fierce political argument, mostly about the Stalin Trotsky controversy. Unbelievable as it sounds today, the Moscow daily Pravda often published a supplement, called “The Oppositionists' Page,” with articles by Trotsky and his followers. Most of the younger villagers were admirers of Trotsky, and on the wall in the village Soviet the chairman had a large picture of the Soviet leader. At a time when the persecution of Trotsky and other oppositionists was in full swing, he once exclaimed: “I dare anyone to take Trotsky's picture out of the room! Only over my dead body!” In 1928 a Communist still felt that he had the right to disagree with the party line and to disagree aloud.

In 1928 rumors began to spread that the kulaks (richer peasants) were to be dispossessed and their property given to the poor peasants, and that private trade, sanctioned by the NEP in 1921, was again to be prohibited. Once, in a torrential rain, I stopped at a hut where the local peasant committee was dispossessing the owner, a kulak, and his family. The committee members were poor peasants of the neighborhood whose only complaint against the Soviet government was that they had not been permitted to lay hands on the kulak earlier. They searched every corner of the attic and cellar, and emptied the closets and trunks. They packed everything into bundles: bedding,

clothing, saucepans, and toys. They disregarded the wailing of the women and children and the threats of the men. All the kulak's agricultural implements were loaded on carts. But the worst came when the farm animals had to be caught. The desperate sobbing and hysterical screaming of the family, the shouting of the committee men, the howling, barking, cackling, squeaking of animals, all this under a terrific downpour, turned the place into utter confusion.

The Russian kulak had from time immemorial mercilessly squeezed the poorer peasants. He was hated and called "bloodsucker" and "cutthroat" in Russian literature and folklore. In releasing popular feeling against the kulak, the Soviet government set free a long-repressed popular desire for cruel vengeance. The authorities felt that the power of the kulak had to be eliminated in order to pave the way for village collectivization. But there must have been other ways of destroying the economic power of the kulak, whom the government permitted to become powerful during the years of NEP, without bringing misery and dire poverty to countless women and children. Some excesses might have been due to the inefficiency and ignorance of local authorities. It is difficult to imagine that when Moscow first decided to curb the increasing power of the kulak, it ordered his wife's skirts and his children's toys taken away.

The new course was widely discussed in private and at meetings. Official spokesmen had a hard time. After the introduction of the NEP the government had encouraged peasants who, by enlarging their sowing area and livestock, and by working hard, were getting high profits from their farmland. Now, like a wildfire, rumors spread that if a peasant possessed more than a certain amount of livestock, or if he had sown or harvested more than a certain number of acres, the surplus would be taken away from him. How much livestock could a peasant have? How many acres? These questions occupied every peasant's mind. The wisdom of King Solomon was required to answer questions at meetings.

"If," argued the peasants, the rich as well as the poor, "my horse has a colt, my cow a calf, my sheep lambs, my sow brings little pigs, and I take good care of them, and they all grow up, I'll be declared a kulak and treated as an enemy of the regime. If I neglect them and let them die, or eat them. I'll be all right with the government. If I and my family kill ourselves working from dawn till night and bring in a large harvest, we will be driven from our homes. But if a man loaf and lets his fields He idle, he will be petted by the government and get my harvest and my livestock."

The idea of tilling land collectively with the help of the latest agricultural machinery, otherwise inaccessible to the Russian village, would probably have appealed to the peasants and avoided much suffering, if it had been presented to them in a comprehensible, human way. Instead, they received a distorted picture composed of wild rumors, confused explanations, and endless bureaucratic blunders.

The 1928 policy against kulaks and for socialized farming revived the issue of every person's past and of his class origin. During the NEP years this matter had lost some of the significance it was given in the early years of the revolution. I felt the change myself. The village Communist group called a meeting to investigate my activities. I

was accused of “patronizing hostile elements,” according to the current terminology. When I started my child-care work I had to select a staff of women to do the cooking and cleaning and to help the kindergarten teachers. Money was scarce in the colonies, and every woman was eager to get a job. I went from house to house and offered the jobs to those who had the cleanest, most efficient households. This was my only standard. I was not interested in who they had been in the past and what views the cook had on Marxism. All along the local Communists had objected to my assistants, but could do nothing until the new policy put wind into their sails. Now it suddenly came out that all the women I had employed had belonged to the “capitalist” class in their home towns and therefore had to be discharged.

At the meeting not even those who called it voiced any criticism of my work. My sins were “of a political nature.” I should not have filled my staff with “class enemies,” when there were others, real friends of the masses. I argued that my concern was to find the best people to serve the children whom we, with such great pains, were teaching cleanliness and order. The whole meeting was carefully planned by the local Communists. All roles and speeches had been assigned beforehand, and nothing I or my supporters said could change the minds of the accusers. This meeting had no power of discharging me or interfering with my work. I was employed by the American Agrojoint, not by the Soviet government. But the discussions somewhat dampened the enthusiasm of those connected with our task. It taught me that people who had obediently followed the old official line were punished for it the moment a new line was proclaimed. The quality of one’s work did not count with these official automatons.

Since the Agrojoint was not opening any new kindergartens and the old ones were running smoothly, I gave up my work in the colonies. In the fall of 1928 I left Ukraine and went to live in Moscow.

Chapter 5

The first Five Year Plan was inaugurated in 1928. It was intended to hasten Russia forward on the road to socialism. Convinced that socialism could not be built in a predominantly rural country, the Bolsheviks now started to industrialize Russia quickly. Since the backward village was too poor to support speedy industrialization, farming had to be simultaneously modernized through collectivization and mechanization.

This Five Year Plan brought with it the prohibition of all private trade in city and village. Such trade had been sanctioned by the NEP in 1921. Up to 1928 the businessmen who had profited from the NEP were pleased with Soviet conditions. They had money and enough to eat. The Communists seemed to have abandoned their disturbing socialist ideas. Life had become almost normal again for the private merchants. Now private trade became illegal.

Feverish activity swept the country, and quickly changed the face of it. The government took over the 30% of distribution. It combed the country for food and other goods and exported as much as it could sell abroad in order to acquire the foreign currency with which to buy the machines Russia needed for her new factories. What remained after the exports was sold to Soviet citizens in state stores or state-controlled co-operatives.

Many Soviet citizens had disliked the NEP period with its concessions to capitalism. Only about a million and a half Soviet citizens were Communists at that time. To this figure should be added some three million members of the Young Communist League. But large numbers of Soviet men and women who did not join the adult party or the League sympathized with communism. They disliked the NEP and the unemployment and luxury living of the few which accompanied it. They were ready to give socialist economic experiments in cities and villages a chance to prove their value. They knew that Russia needed something new.

Beginning in 1929, no one had to worry about jobs any more. The Women's Prophylactic Institute, whose task it was to return prostitutes to normal lives by teaching them trades, now discontinued its work for lack of new inmates. There were plenty of jobs, and no woman had to recur to prostitution for a living. The Unemployment Exchange, one of the busiest offices in Moscow during the NEP, closed its doors. On the other hand everybody began to worry about food. Those who had enjoyed the NEP felt the ground shaking under their feet. But those who between 1921 and 1928 had mourned the lack of revolutionary spirit felt wings of enthusiasm grow again.

The first Five Year Plan was published in 1928 after many months of careful preparations and discussions within the Communist party and the Soviet government. Every

single phase of life was changed by the Plan. Each factory, scientific institution, school, government office, theater, department store, restaurant, shoe repair shop, beauty parlor, sport club, writers' association, etc. submitted its own htd Five Year Plan. When two people got together, they first talked of the food shortage and then of what they were doing or going to do under the new Plan. Boris Mironov, the foreign press censor, who originated many a Soviet anecdote, assured us that the government was considering Five Year Plans submitted by midwives and rat exterminators.

The more the Five Year Plan expanded, the scarcer food and other commodities became. Private enterprises catering to everyday necessities of life were abolished, and the government concentrated chiefly on the expansion of heavy industry. Large quantities of victuals—butter, eggs, and meat—were shipped abroad in exchange for foreign machinery. In the beginning of the Plan it was impossible to obtain butter, milk, eggs, kerosene, galoshes, tea, sugar, clothing, shoestrings, almost anything, without standing in line for many hours under rain, snow, or scorching sun. Soon, standing in line did not help. The stores were empty. Ration cards were introduced for almost everything, but little could be bought with the cards. There were different cards for factory workers and office workers, for wage earners and dependents, for children and adults. They gradually grew into large-sized booklets with coupons of the most varied and difficult color schemes. Shopping became a shrewd art. Leaving the house in search of food, we equipped ourselves with newspapers, jars, boxes and cans. No wrapping or receptacles of any kind were furnished in the stores, and one never knew in advance what was to be found on that day. I once had to carry a herring by its tail but I couldn't well have done that with milk, flour, or jam.

The authorities did not make the slightest effort to help the harassed housewife. Neither the radio nor the press would tell her how to stretch the little she had, how to keep clean without soap, and what to substitute for what. The shortages were never mentioned officially. To be sure, there was a daily column in the papers called "The Food Front," but it reported nonexistent improvements in the situation, or consisted of items which brought little relief: "On coupon 38 of the dark purple food card, candles will be given instead of soap," or "The light blue June coupons for dried fruit are good this month for 100 grams of rice for children and invalids."

Almost every commissariat, factory, and office had opened a food store for its own employees. Usually one member of a family or a maid did the shopping, and if several members of one family had their food stores in different parts of town, it took almost the entire day to collect the meager rations. Besides, the procedure in the stores was slow and inefficient. After standing for a long time in line to buy the food, there were two more long lines—one for paying the cashier, the other to receive the purchase. The unsung hero of the first Five Year Plan, the housekeeper, had to possess the genius of a strategist to produce a meal.

In March, 1930, when I expected Louis back from his annual trip to the United States, I hunted for days to find some delicacy for his first meal at home. All I was able to get was a bunch of withered carrots, a handful of dried peas, a pickle, a herring,

and a few frozen apples. I also bought a can of sardines from one of the last Nepmen Mohicans whom I found hiding in a doorway.

When I opened the can at home, a most putrefying odor filled the room. The sardines must have been older than the Bolshevik revolution.

All the things which seem so indispensable in our normal life were either unobtainable or of miserable quality. When Louis was due to return from abroad, I mailed him many page-long request lists for the family and friends, and sometimes for complete strangers. The items asked would include: stockings, absorbent cotton, needles and thread, first-aid bandages, rubber stockings, hairpins, safety pins, soap, mending yarn, kitchen knives, nails, Yale locks, clothes and hair brushes, wicks for kerosene burners, electric bulbs and wire, paper of all kinds, buttons, leather for shoe repair, nailfiles, eyeglasses, lipsticks, hair dyes, aspirin, diapers, typewriters, ear trumpets, dust cloths, stethoscopes, gloves, scissors, can openers, shoes, galoshes, all clothing, hats, blankets, bed sheets, and many more. None of these could be bought in a Moscow store.

I once had to stop writing to Louis when he was in New York because I ran out of envelopes and there were none to be found in Moscow. For domestic mail we made envelopes out of old paper but it would not have looked well to send these abroad. More than once I got stuck in the middle of the translations or literary research work I was doing because of lack of paper. If, after hours of standing in line, I bought 50 sheets of a grayish, thin paper I considered myself lucky. Toilet paper, wrapping paper, or any other kind of paper was a luxury only to be dreamt about.

The Communist press in foreign countries, happy over the return of Russia to socialism, published ecstatic reports of "Socialist Plenty" in the Soviet Union. One magazine, published abroad, carried the description of a worker's breakfast: bananas, hot chocolate, butter, cheese, and several kinds of bread. But bananas had never been a breakfast food in Russia and now there were none to be bought. The Soviet workers saw no chocolate then, very little butter or cheese, and only one kind of bread—gray and tasteless. These lies in the foreign Communist press resulted in misunderstandings and disappointments. Foreign workers, lured by the glowing reports and finding no work in their own countries, flocked to the Soviet Union hoping to find a paradise. Though the Soviet government gave them many privileges denied to Russian workers, even an unemployed European or American worker would hardly have regarded his life in Russia as paradise. Many returned home disillusioned. Their reports were used by the enemies of the Soviet Union.

Russia did not need any false stories of its successes. Those years were hard years, yet they were good years, full of exhilaration and renewed hope in the possibilities of socialism. A superhuman effort was being made to create happiness at the cost of maximum human sacrifices. As in the first years after the revolution, people now starved and froze for the sake of a better future. The man in the street saw a vision and often spoke in terms of the future. The present offered little. But the future promised much. To the scientist it meant ideal research laboratories, to the architect new beautiful cities, to the physician a modern hospital in every Soviet village, and

to all a wonderful free life. What if there were no shoestrings and razor blades today Tomorrow there would be shoestrings and razor blades for everyone. The ghost of capitalism, the NEP, that ugly detour from the road to socialism, was gone. Nothing stood in the way to the kind of life for which the revolution was made in 1917.

Of course, there were skeptics and waverers. Most of us had our doubts at one time or another. But the young and the strong, people with active minds and bodies, gave themselves unquestioningly to the great task of rebuilding Russia. They carried the spark of enthusiasm to the factories, offices, mines, colleges, and homes, and bore uncomplainingly every unbelievable hardship. It was the ardor of these people which covered the old backward Russian land with a huge net of modern dams, roads, power plants, highways, railroad lines, factories, and waterways. The new giant industrial enterprises, Magnitogorsk, the Dnieper Dam, Kuznetsk, and others, could hardly have been built without the utmost devotion, initiative, and sacrifices of their directors, engineers, and workers.

These men were as dear to the Soviet heart as was Lenin's old guard in the days of the revolution. We were once invited to a dinner given at the conclusion of a conference of directors and leading engineers of the new industrial plants and projects. Many of them were under thirty, few were over thirty-five. When they were called upon to make short after-dinner remarks they suggested that they be introduced not by their names but by the names of the plants where they worked; Stalingrad Tractor Plant, Nizhni Automobile Plant, Sehnash etc. "Our names," they said, "are of no importance. Someone else might be in our place tomorrow. The plants only are important." In the purge of 1936-1938 these same builders of Russia's industry, as well as most members of Lenin's old guard, became anathema and synonyms of Judas, and the press called them "enemies of the people," "traitors," and "scum of the earth."

The first Five Year Plan aimed to destroy private capitalism in Russia. It hit hard at the Nepman who was brought into existence by the party line of 1921-1928. All Nepmen, whether storekeepers or street peddlers, as well as all members of former bourgeois families, were now disfranchised. With the loss of the right to vote they lost the right to possess a food card, an apartment, and a job. Schools and colleges closed their doors to the children of the disfranchised. Many a college student expelled on the eve of graduation, committed suicide, as did some high-school boys and girls. Nadezhda Krupskaya, Lenin's widow, a woman to whom political slogans were empty unless they meant human values, had the courage to publish in the Soviet press a violent attack against those responsible for this cruelty. Her attack improved the situation in the elementary schools only.

Nepmen who enriched themselves constituted a small minority among those who were now accused of being "class enemies." The majority were people who were persecuted because they had chosen the wrong parents. They could save themselves by publicly renouncing those parents. The daily papers carried hundreds of such cruel notices: "I, Peter , hereby state that I have no connection with my capitalist father and mother." Or they could denounce members of their families to the secret police

as traitors and thus save their own skins. They could also falsify birth certificates. A popular joke told of a man who, to prove how very proletarian he was, produced a birth certificate showing that he was the son of a peasant woman and two factory workers.

I never had much sympathy with the NEP and Nepmen. But I was appalled by the helplessness of the thousands of innocent victims. Even under the czar there were philanthropic institutions, liberal officials, and sympathetic citizens to whom revolutionists, members of persecuted minorities, and other victims of czarist oppression could turn for financial and legal help. But now people were afraid to help victims of government measures. Under Stalin's regime, to be associated in any way with a person in disfavor implied political sympathy with that person and that was dangerous. After several months of numberless tragedies and suffering, the government set up a commission to which the disfranchised could appeal. Many were restored in their rights. But the suicides and the heartbroken could not be restored.

I was also appalled by the gradual disappearance of independent thinking and by the enforcement of spiritual conformity and blind obedience to the current party line. Any public criticism of the government policy and the Five Year Plan was forbidden. This was a new thing. Until then people in sympathy with the regime felt free to voice their friendly criticism. Now even they could only express their views in the narrow circle of their intimates, preferably when no Communists were around. The class war which the Soviet government declared in 1928 against all remnants of capitalism in Russia also became a war of Communists in Russia against non-Communists. Few Communists associated with non-Communists. As in the first years after the revolution, Communists were inclined to see a "class enemy" in everyone who used refined language and wore a clean collar.

We knew a Soviet official whose job it was to look after foreign businessmen in Moscow. He one day aired his bitter complaints:

"My work requires a daily shave and a clean shirt. Now, would you call it anti-proletarian? Is dinner with foreigners in a gypsy restaurant a contribution to the Five Year Plan or unbolshevik conduct? And is an exchange of views on a dancer's legs part of our trade relations or ideological contact with our class enemy?"

Communists were officially raised to the status of angels who could do no wrong. Plays, films, and books pictured them as mannequins on stilts, delivering political speeches and quoting production figures and Pravda editorials. Authors had to be careful not to ascribe any human foibles to their Communist heroes. These had to be left for the villains, for whom no black was black enough. One popular playwright had a good play torn to pieces by the critics because his hero liked an occasional drink. Another was accused of slandering Soviet womanhood because his heroine was jealous of her husband.

An unfavorable press could bring a great deal of trouble to the unfortunate author. To be on the safe side, he filled his writings with the current official slogans and phraseology. But a zealous critic, eager to display his own political orthodoxy, was always able to find faults. Reviewing a play on the new Soviet village where the author

made pretty sure that he did not leave out a single phase of collectivization, one critic gleefully said:

“Ah, but you omitted to mention the co-operative store!”

If an author wrote a love story or revived an episode from Russia’s past, he was accused of “escaping from reality and criminally ignoring the burning problems of our day.” This was a serious crime. Either because Stalin has a single-idea mind or for some other reason, there is never, at any given moment, more than one deity in the Soviet Union. Socialism was the current deity and industrialization its prophet.

Realism was another prophet. Fairy tales were prohibited and new children’s books were written about tractors, the building of railroads, the production of grain, and the mining of coal. Art for art’s sake was considered bourgeois and therefore taboo. If a painter felt inspired to paint a sunset, he did well, if he did not wish to end his career abruptly, to add a smiling collectivized peasant on a tractor. Dancers turned to Marxist economic principles for inspiration, and poets imitated the sound of machines. The famous old Russian cotton-print designs were discarded for new ones showing road workers, harvesting, and turbines.

By 1930, Russia was swept by an exultant economic activity which it had never experienced. Creative forces which had been dormant for centuries awoke and performed miracles. The buoyancy of the nation was hard to resist even if one was not blind to shortcomings. I was carried away by it and greatly admired it most of the time. But I deeply regretted the suffering, part of which, at least, could have been avoided.

I regretted that hand in hand with this incredible upsurge of industrial construction went a visible deterioration of spiritual values. During the first years after the revolution, in the midst of filth, terror, and poverty, there was an integrity of spirit, considered by Lenin and all true revolutionists as an indivisible part of the revolution. This rapidly disappeared in the late twenties. So easily and innocently were people accused of being “class enemies,” saboteurs, oppositionists, and what not, and punished, that more and more, instead of acting according to their convictions and feeling, they played safe. Praising Stalin was always a safe thing to do. A quick turn and twist when the party line changed was desirable too. A denunciation of a friend was sometimes the best way out of a hole. Even more so was a rejection of all independent thinking. For a while, to be sure, many Communists and non-Communists resisted submissiveness and conformity, and put up an unsuccessful fight to preserve the humanitarian side of the revolution. But the word “humanitarian” itself was soon banned from Soviet usage, as were all other words expressing emotions and feelings instead of action. They were jeered at as unproletarian. Life had gained tremendously in excitement and exuberance, and had lost in honesty and decency.

Chapter 6

The first months in Moscow after my return from the Ukraine, from August, 1928, until April, 1929, were a cavalcade of apartments. A Russian went for a vacation to the Caucasus, an American newspaperman left for a spree in Berlin or for a family reunion in the United States—these were the chances we had for a temporary place to stay. Between times, a hotel room had to do. Getting work was less of a problem.

The Comintern Congress was in session in the fall of 1928 and needed translators. A Soviet friend telephoned a high Comintern official about me, and less than an hour later I received the credentials of an interpreter for the Congress. A few years later I would not have been able to enter the building of the Comintern. This was the first Comintern Congress to be held outside the Kremlin walls. It took place in the famous Hall of Columns, where Lenin's body lay in state in 1924, where most big trials took place, where weekly concerts were the scene of Moscow high society life. This was the last time the opposition to Stalin at a Comintern Congress or any other place was permitted to speak out publicly.

On each Comintern delegate's seat was an earphone with five buttons marked Russian, French, German, Chinese, English. As the speaker talked, the translators, in low voice, translated his words into microphones connected with the earphones. On the day I reported to work, I translated Bukharin's brilliant speech into French. When he finished, he received long cordial ovations. The strain of working constantly in four languages prevented me from following all the proceedings of the Congress. But I well remember the dramatic rejection of Trotsky's and Radek's appeals to be reinstated in the party, and never-ending cheers with which the Congress received Bela Kun, the Hungarian revolutionist who had escaped from Hungary.

Besides the general Comintern meetings, I translated in the subcommittees which heard the reports from different countries all over the world. In the near future Communists everywhere were to use the same terminology and to have one and only one solution for all their problems: Help the Soviet Union. In 1928, however, some of the delegates still talked in their own words about the particular problems of their countries and the different ways of solving them.

When the Comintern Congress was over, I got another job as translator. But it was hard to divide life between a full day's office work, two small children, helping Louis in his journalistic work, frequent changing of living quarters, and the complex job of keeping house in Moscow. I gave up the office work.

We lived for a while in an apartment house belonging to the AMO (Automobile) factory, formerly a Home for Noble Aged Ladies. It had huge communal kitchens, from

which food was constantly stolen, and wide, long corridors, the delight of the many kids in the house. The political education of our boys in these proletarian surroundings made rapid progress. Their games consisted of constant warfare with the outside world and were full of fiery political slogans.

As winter approached, I saved money by ordering quilted linings for the boys' summer coats. When the dressmaker brought the linings, the boys refused to try them on. Their argument was:

"If we wear the coat and a lining besides, it makes two coats. We will be called bourzhoui because only bourzhoui possess two coats."

The fear of being called bourzhoui was great. I once telephoned my mother in Latvia and let the boys speak to her. When they returned to play with the other children in the hall, a small boy objected.

"You are friendly with foreign bourzhoui" he said. "We shan't play with you."

A Moscow newspaper reprinted a Nation article of Louis's and in an introductory note called him the "American bourgeois correspondent." The children in the house learned about it and gave Yura a sound beating because his father was a bourzhoui. He came home all in tears:

"Must papa be a journalist? Can't he be a worker hke other papas? Please, please, write him he should stop being a journalist."

Workers' children were proud of their fathers and were considered the aristocrats among the other youngsters.

After many months of wandering, the Foreign OfSce helped us rent a three-room apartment in the former mansion of Haritonenko, once Russia's "Sugar King," on the bank of the Moscow River, and I was able to unpack our trunks. Our rooms were in one of the two "wings" of the mansion where, in former days, lived the better class servants—housekeepers, tutors, head butler, French cooks, clerks, and so on. Maxim Litvinov, then assistant foreign commissar, lived in the main house. Its reception rooms still preserved the magnificent, overladen style of the Russian upper class. But the private rooms of the Litvinov family were simply and tastefully decorated. The "wings" were now occupied by Foreign Office employees: heads of departments, laundresses, carpenters, bookkeepers, as well as a few foreigners. Neuman, later of the Washington Soviet embassy, Marcel Rosenberg, an old friend from the Genoa conference, later ambassador to Loyalist Spain, and Rita Klymen, correspondent of the London Daily Express, were among our neighbors.

The apartment had no real kitchen but there was a room, shared by two other families, which had a sink with running cold water. This was our "kitchen" where we cooked on kerosene burners. There were no facilities in the apartment for taking a bath and the wood-burning Holland stoves were far from perfect. But we each had our own room, which few of our Russian friends possessed and which to us was the most important luxury. Besides, the house had a garden full of magnificent lilac trees and the view of the Kremlin just across the narrow river compensated me for much discomfort.

We had no furniture, no money to buy any, and besides, the stores had none to sell. The Foreign Office permitted us to pick out what we needed from their large storage. Louis was happy as a child when he discovered an enormous mahogany desk with numerous drawers, the smallest of which served us as our bank for years. Whatever money we possessed, we kept there. We never had any keys, and the children as well as the maid were always up to date on our financial affairs. The drawer was full at times and uncomfortably empty at others.

We were to pay seven roubles a month rent for the furniture to the Foreign Office, which we did for about two years. Then the monthly bills stopped coming. I inquired at the Foreign Office. There had been a change in personnel in the administrative offices, nobody knew a thing about the furniture, and there was no trace of it in the books. I tried again and again, but no one ever wanted our seven roubles. When I was leaving the Soviet Union in 1939, I had a difficult job convincing the Foreign Office that all our furniture, some of it quite valuable, was their property.

Apartments devoid of any labor-saving devices, plus lengthy shopping hours, made householding a complicated affair, and Soviet women had to have someone to help them keep house if they wanted to do anything besides household work. My first maid was Frossya, a little village girl from the Kfin region. She did not know much about keeping house but she was a friendly, warmhearted soul, and we got along splendidly for four years. During her first week with us I almost discharged her on the spot. While out for a walk, the children became thirsty. She took them into the corner pharmacy and gave them a drink from an open filthy jug with lukewarm stale water, using the only glass, hardly ever washed, from which everybody drank. I tried to explain to Frossya what was wrong with that. She promised never to do it again, but it was clear that she did not understand why I was so fussy about a drink of water.

She went to evening classes for adults, and in very few years the ignorant village girl became a literate, civilized young lady. When she had her own child, she brought it up according to all modern rules of feeding and hygiene. She would not let her old mother take care of the baby for fear that, in old peasant fashion, she would pacify the child with a rag filled with chewed-up bread. She named her boy Vitya out of love for our Vitya, and he was like an adopted child of ours. I nursed him through sickness and supplied him with food, medicines, and clothing. Frossya sent her Vitya to a kindergarten, and his bringing up was not much different from the bringing up of my children, whereas a whole world distinguished her own childhood from mine.

Frossya's village relatives used to come to visit her and stay with us. In appreciation of this and of our friendly relations with Frossya, they brought us presents. I once spent weeks in a desperate, vain search for warm footwear for the boys. All the stores had to offer on the eve of the rigorous Moscow winter were bathing trunks and summer socks which we had been unable to buy the previous summer. When I had given up all hope, Frossya's mother arrived with a priceless present; two pairs of valenki, high felt boots, which keep one's feet warm like a stove. On another occasion, when we hadn't seen a potato for weeks, her brother arrived with twenty pounds of them. Their gifts of dried

mushrooms, pickled berries, and fresh vegetables were always a welcome addition to our monotonous diet.

Frossya's brother, Semyon, was the only Communist in his village and as such he was responsible for the village's obedience to all government decrees and laws. One evening in 1930, sipping tea and rolling his cigarettes in our apartment, he gave Louis and me a picture of a village in the process of being collectivized.

"When we were told of collectivization," he said, "I liked the idea. So did a few others in our village, men like me, who had worked in the city and served in the Red Army* The rest of the village was dead set against it and wouldn't even listen to me. So my friends and I decided to start our own little co-operative farm, and we pooled our few implements and land. You know our peasants. It's no use talking to them about plans and figures; you have to show them results to convince them. We knew that if we could show them that we earned higher profits than before, they would like it and do as we did.

"Well, we got going. Then, one day, an order comes from the Klin party committee that we had to get too more families into our little collective. We managed to pull in about a dozen. And, believe me, this was not easy. It needed a lot of coaxing and wheedling. But no coaxing could get us even one more family. I went to Klin and explained the situation to the party committee. I begged them to let us go ahead as we started and I promised them, if they did, to have the whole village in the collective by next year. They wouldn't listen to me. They had orders from Moscow, long sheets saying how many collectives with how many members they had to show on their records. That was all. They told me that I was sabotaging collectivization and that unless I did as I was told I would be thrown out of the party and disgraced forever. Well, I knew that I couldn't get our people in, unless I did what I heard others were doing, in other words, forced them. When I had first heard of people doing that, I thought I would rather die than do it myself. I was sure that my way was the right way. And here I was with no other choice. I called a village meeting and I told the people that they had to join the collective, that these were Moscow's orders, and if they didn't, they would be exiled and their property taken away from them. They all signed the paper that same night, every one of them. Don't ask me how I felt and how they felt. And the same night they started to do what the other villages of the U.S.S.R. were doing when forced into collectives—to kill their livestock. They had heard that the government would take away their cattle as soon as they became members of a collective.

"I took the new membership list to the committee at Klin, and this time they were very pleased with me. When I told them of the slaughter of cattle and that the peasants felt as though they were being sent to jail, they weren't interested. They had the list and could forward it to Moscow; that was all they cared about. I couldn't blame them, they were under orders as well as I was.

"Our village remained in an uproar. The peasants were ready to kill me. Especially the women. Vicious rumors were spread that houses were going to be torn down and barracks built in which men and women would all sleep in one long row under one

huge blanket. It was this blanket story which especially enraged our women. Things went from bad to worse. In our village as well as elsewhere, even though the peasants had formally joined the collectives, they wouldn't work and went on killing the cows and chickens.

"Then last March the papers and radio were full of Stalin's article 'Dizziness with Success.' He laced into us for forcing peasants to join the collectives. We village Communists had gone too far, Stalin scolded.

"That was exactly what I had said right from the beginning. But our local authorities wouldn't listen because they had orders from Moscow and were afraid to disobey them. Everybody in the village now laughed at me. I wanted to go away and never return. But the committee wouldn't let me go. 'No,' they said, 'you carry on but do it right this time.' As if they didn't know that I had been right all along and that I was made to pay for other people's mistakes. They made me spit into my own face. And here we are now, the same twelve families working together as we had started, only with our livestock gone, our minds confused, and the villagers laughing into my face. The other night at a meeting when I told them about new taxation, they made fun of me and asked: 'How do we know that you are not going to blunder again this time. ^ ' "

Chapter 7

I HAD asked to have our boys admitted to the Foreign Office kindergarten. It had an excellent reputation and was the only one in which children of a foreigner had a chance of being accepted. For several months I received evasive answers to my inquiries. Finally a favorable answer came. When we arrived, and the boys took off their coats and stood there in their Russian blouses made at home from their father's discarded pajamas, the director, a blond Wagnerian woman, sighed with relief. She later explained her sigh to me and also the reason for the delay in the children's admission. The previous year another foreign correspondent's child had aroused the jealousy of the other children and the parents' anger by the expensive clothes she wore and by her tales of the wonderful food she ate at home. When the director heard that she was again to admit foreign children, she fought for months against it. Her sigh of relief was due to the boys' perfect Russian and their simple clothing which was no different from others.

The kindergarten was clean and sunny, and full of amusing decorations. Each child had its own little closet for toilet articles and clothing, with a picture of a flower or animal on it for those who couldn't yet read their names. They were mostly children of Foreign Office employees, from charwomen up to the highest officials, but a small group were children of GPU officials who had their office and apartments across the street from the Foreign Office. For the privilege of using the kindergarten, the GPU helped with food, summer camps, and teachers.

I was spending my days in the Foreign Office library, gathering material for Louis's forthcoming book, *Soviets in World Affairs*. I often dropped in at the kindergarten, which was across the hall from the library, mainly at meal times or when the kids had to be dressed for their walk or for going home. The kindergarten was short of help and my visits were welcome. I started to come regularly, met many of the parents, and at the next parent-teachers meeting I was elected chairman of the Parents' Council. It meant extra work and responsibility but I was pleased. I liked this kind of work and besides, I was glad of the opportunity to meet so many people in a close personal way.

Our kindergarten teachers were greatly overworked and unable to spend much time with the parents talking over each child's problems. This was my main task. Parents frequently came to my house for a talk. Louis liked this part of my activity because, like all Russians, they kindly let him pump them, and they were an excellent source of information for him. But there was a time when this proved to be a great nuisance to Louis. In the summer of 1930 the children were sent to a camp. Once a month there

was a parents' visiting day. I spent two days a week in the camp and when I returned to Moscow solicitous parents would telephone or drop in

C 53] to find out about their children. Louis could do little work that summer. Whenever I left the house, I put on his desk a long list of children's names with a bit of information about each of them. In his best Russian Louis would inform Foreign Office stenographers and GPU investigators that Manichka's stool was okay now, that Lisa loved her new pink socks, that Misha's sandals needed repair, that Svetik sent love to her daddy, and that Kim had found a robin's nest.

Parental oversolicitude and the spoiling of the children was a constant subject of friction between the kindergarten authorities and the parents. As an explanation they all gave the same reason. After four years of world war and three years of civil war, during which they had often given up hope ever to live normal lives again, a home and a child were most precious gifts. Having fought for a happier future amidst blood and filth, they wanted their children to be shielded from all brutality and sorrow. Most of them had had no opportunities for education or for bettering their own lives before the revolution, and they were determined to let their children enjoy everything Soviet life could give them.

There was not yet much the Soviet government could give children in material riches, but it certainly gave the most it had. However, the revolution was not made for material gains alone. Soviet parents wanted their children to have a feeling of self-respect and dignity which they themselves had not known under the czar.

The kindergarten had weekly meetings when every child could voice criticism, suggestions, or a wish. The children stood up and spoke. What they said was carefully noted by the teachers and at the next meeting a report on action was given. The children loved it and the parents, who were invited to attend these meetings, beamed. This was one of those things which made the revolution worth its cost.

Physical punishment was part of normal life in czarist Russia. Old Russian folk songs said that if a husband never gave his wife a beating it proved he did not love her. Political prisoners as well as criminals were flogged by the police. And the whipping of children was part of their upbringing even in the better classes. Now the streetcars carried signs, "Don't strike children," and the kindergarten kids were told to report whenever their parents submitted them to physical punishment. The parents were then reprimanded at open meetings in their factories or offices.

Once, when my boys were recuperating after an illness, I, irritated from being shut up in the apartment for a long time, lightly slapped Vitya's hand. He was so outraged that he burst into tears and delivered a speech— which was unusual for him:

"I am not your son any more and you are not my mother. As soon as I get out of bed, I leave you and sleep in the park and die there. I will die purposely so that you feel sorry. And don't ask me to forgive you. Because I will never forgive you. . . ."

Yura joined him in tears and in speechmaking of a more political nature:

“There are no Soviet laws that permit parents to hit children. We will report you in the kindergarten and we will go to the militia and to the ‘Friends of Children Society.’ They will put you in prison and they will take us away from you. . . .”

When my mother punished me in my childhood, I [55] had to kiss her hand, however unjust the punishment was, and ask forgiveness. It took me over an hour to get my sons’ pardon.

The first Five Year Plan was making its impression on the kindergarten too. The bulletins from the Commissariat of Education, which used to consist of general lines of guidance, began to give rigid, detailed regulations. The teachers were instructed week by week what to tell and what not to tell the children. Some of our teachers preferred to resign and took industrial jobs. Those who remained half-heartedly substituted books and games on production for fairy tales and games of imagination. One day orders came to “study collectivism.” We all thoroughly disliked the idea of burdening small children with such difficult problems but only a few parents had the courage to say so. It did not help them. Orders were orders. So the teachers tried to explain the complicated matter of collectivism to even the smallest children. These—the three-year-old ones—were shown at play how they could achieve more in digging, building, or binding garlands if they did it all together. The older children were given more complicated examples, while the highest group—the seven-year-old ones—were easily made to understand the advantages of modern agricultural machinery used collectively.

The way the children grasped the idea in a playful way confirmed what I had already found with my own children. When they asked me to explain an intricate political cartoon or a difficult word, my first impulse was to say what I resented so much in my own childhood: “This is too difficult for you; when you grow up you will understand.” The boys were never satisfied with this answer and insisted that if I explained it to them in an easy way, they would understand. They usually did.

I believe that children everywhere should understand what goes on around them. I did not object to the Soviet government wanting Soviet children to know what was happening in the country. But I objected to the strict order of doing it on a certain day and in a certain way. I do not think it was necessary, in order to acquaint the children with industrialization and socialism, to take from them the books and games which had made many generations of children happy.

I was not the only one who felt this way. In order to have extra funds for the summer camp, the kindergarten arranged a book bazaar for Foreign Office employees. We got together a large number of books and set up nice colorful stands. The Commissariat of Education “asked” us to have a special display of books harmful for children and gave us an official list of same. They included all fairy tales and some books by Russian authors, among them all the books of Kornei Chukovsky, whose children’s verses with their wonderful rhythm and rhymes had captured the hearts of young and old alike. But his animals talk and other things happen in his poems which are not exactly the way they happen in real life. This was not in accord with the party line of the day. Our better judgment notwithstanding, we followed instructions and placed the books

best loved by children under a sign, "Harmful Books." When the bazaar opened, there was a rush to this display. Everybody tried to buy the "harmful" books which could no longer be obtained in bookstores. They were bitterly disappointed to learn that these books were not for sale but on display as a warning that they must not be read by children. Before the evening was over, we had to remove the "harmful books; they almost created a riot.

I was disturbed by the regimentation of spirit which invaded even the kindergarten and by the wrong picture of the world given there to the children. Once Vitya asked me:

"Where do people live abroad?"

"In houses, of course."

"But who builds them?"

"Workers."

He smiled at me condescendingly:

"Don't you know that there are no workers abroad, only bourgeois? The workers are all Communists and they are in jail."

There was no use arguing. Yelena Vassilyevna, his teacher, had said so.

Though our children lived better than most other children, their health was undermined by privations. In 1931 they went through a series of serious illnesses. This had one bright feature for them. They were home with me, and I spent hours telling them stories, reading "harmful" books to them, and feeding their minds with things other than agriculture and industry. I sincerely believed that industrialization was essential for the Soviet Union, and I wanted my boys to know about it. But I refused to think and feel nothing but machinery and production. I wanted my sons to love Pushkin's poems, old folk songs, and Hans Andersen's fairy tales. I wanted them to know as much about stars, flowers, and human beings as about tractors and dynamos. They were not permitted to get this knowledge openly and I imparted it to them in the privacy of our home.

Chapter 8

In the summer of 1930, the Soviet Union and Great Britain resumed diplomatic relations, and the Sugar King's palace was chosen to house the British embassy. I welcomed the resumption of friendship but was sorry to have to leave the beautiful garden and the view on the river and the Kremlin, The only accommodation we could get was two rooms in an old two-story frame house condemned to be tom down in the near future.

We lived one flight up. On our floor there were ten rooms housing seven families numbering twenty-three persons. All seven families used one little sooty dark kitchen with a low ceiling and a tiny window which had got stuck long ago and was never opened. Seven small tables with a kerosene burner on each represented the seven families. The kitchen had no gas, no hot water, no ice box, no shelves. The latter would have been of little use since nothing could have been kept in the kitchen anyway. Even the kerosene burners had to be taken into the rooms overnight for fear of their being stolen. We possessed no cupboard or china closet for household articles. Louis and I slept in the smaller of our two rooms, which was also his workroom. In the larger room we ate and the boys lived and slept. A comer of that room, fenced off with our big clothes closet and a few gypsy shawls, became Frossya's room.

There was one small bathroom and a separate tiny toilet for the twenty-three inhabitants of the apartment. But despite the discomforts and troubles which at times considerably poisoned life, the years in that shabby gloomy house were happy and full of rich exciting life and great expectations.

The house faced a picturesque pond surrounded with very old trees. In the summer the pond was the playground of rowboat lovers while in the winter the glittering ice and a band attracted hundreds of skaters. Many foreign visitors came to our apartment, and to counteract the first bad impression of the house, I used to take them quickly to the window to admire the pond. I once caught on the face of an old American visitor an expression of disgust when his hand touched the window sill. I knew that the sill was perfectly clean but it looked dilapidated and showed hardly any sign of its former whiteness. I wanted to point out its cleanliness to him but then I should also have had to tell him that it was impossible to find a single can of paint or varnish in Moscow. After a quick struggle with myself, I preferred to have the old gentleman go back to America with the impression that Markoosha Fischer was a sloppy housekeeper rather than to admit how poor the Soviet Union was.

Our door-beH system presented great difficulties to viating foreigners. Each of the seven families on our floor was assigned a number of rings at the street-entrance door.

When the bell started to ring, we held our breaths until it reached four, which was ours. But frequently, an angry neighbor would bring to our door an embarrassed foreigner who, in ignorance of our system, had simply pushed the bell once or twice. The bell never functioned properly, children played pranks, and there were frequent conflicts about it. When, for instance, the party with the six rings went down in nightclothes shivering with cold—there are no automatic buzzers in Moscow and the stairways and halls were not heated—and found a gay crowd clamoring for the young man with seven rings, there followed a fierce argument.

We tried to introduce the system of longs and shorts. But this made things worse. Old babushka Platonova had two shorts, the Boyevs two long. When the Boyev girl's beau arrived in the evening, he breathlessly rang twice. They seemed long to him, but to babushka they sounded short. No one could agree on the length of rings and there was more quarreling about the bells than ever.

Eventually I was elected alderman for the floor. All Moscow apartments occupied by more than one family have an alderman whose duty it is to pay electric bills, to care for proper sanitary conditions, to sell government bonds, to arbitrate disputes, etc. The former alderman, a factory worker, enjoyed many privileges, like one ring at the front door, the right to use the bathtub at the most cherished time—the eve of the free day—and having his kitchen table nearest the window, the only place where no artificial light was needed during the day. The only privilege I accepted was the place of the kitchen table. I did not want one ring because beggars, peddlers, and everybody seeking information used it. And we never took baths in our bathroom. The bathmb was used for washing laundry, galoshes, and kerosene cans, and for dyeing clothes. We used to take our baths in our foreign friends' hotel rooms.

We would phone Maurice Hindus, for instance, at the Hotel Metropole and ask whether we could come at noon, say. Maurice, always kindness itself, would tell us to come, and would have extra towels and soap prepared. Or he would say: "No, at noon X or Z is coming for a bath. Why don't you come at five? Y will be here and we will all have tea afterwards."

Collecting money for electric bills was an unpleasant part of an alderman's job. The tenants paid according to the amount of bulbs they used. Electric irons, heaters, etc. were prohibited because the tenants could never agree on the amount of electricity used. But people used them in secret and some cheated about the amount and size of their bulbs. I had to make up the balance of the monthly bills out of my own pocket.

Some of our neighbors and their visitors were only recent residents of a city and had not yet mastered the intricacies of plumbing. Bulky objects were thrown into the toilet. The flooding that followed was my responsibility. I could not simply go to the phone and call a plumber. I had to report it to the house committee, which sent one of its members to ascertain whether I was really unable to fix the damage myself. Thereupon the committee informed the house plumber, who came around when it suited his convenience. This might be two days later.

Settling disputes among neighbors took a lot of my time. They arose from many causes. Children beat one another or stole toys. Comrade A made a habit of using the toilet too long. Food disappeared from the kitchen. Adjoining rooms belonging to two different families were heated from one stove in the wall. One family liked an overheated room, another could not stand heat. Family quarrels were occasionally fought out in my room. A friendly talk over a glass of tea cleared the atmosphere in many cases.

But we also had more serious cases which had to be taken to court. These were mostly disputes involving Moscow's most crucial problem—housing space. For a few additional square feet of living space people were ready to kill—and in some cases did kill. On our floor we actually saw examples of the misery brought to families which had to live in one room. There were violent hatreds, divorces, and unhappy children. Newweds had to move into the small room of the young husband's parents. This quickly ruined a happy marriage. Another couple got divorced but had to stay in their room together and after a while she brought her new husband into the room. Family quarrels always took place in the presence of children. There was only one room so where could the children go?

A source of frequent quarreling in ours as well as in other apartments was the turns in cleaning the kitchen, hall, bathroom, toilet, and stairway. Many people, otherwise kind and intelligent, were nervous from lack of privacy and sleep in the noisy apartment, and from too little food and too much work. They found an outlet in trivial scandals and bickering. More than once, when I was unable to settle a dispute over whose turn it was, Frossya and I scrubbed the floors for someone else.

Our neighbors were often petty in their squabbles. They could fight over a pencil or a piece of string. But their spirit was far from petty when important issues were at stake, and there was much friendliness and warmth in them. It would have been almost impossible at times to bear those years had it not been for the help of friends and neighbors. Russians are always responsive to other people's troubles and they had ample occasion then to help one another. The prodigious Russian hospitality had not deserted them even in the meager years of Soviet reconstruction. They shared their food with those who had less. Serving tea to visitors, they would bring to the table every bit of sweets they could find in the house, not thinking that they might not be able to buy another piece of candy or cake for a long time. There was much sickness due to overcrowdedness and malnutrition. We all helped nurse one another. Neighbors took children out for a walk when adults were sick, or sat with sick children when their parents went to work. They lent one another wearing apparel, food, chairs, kitchen utensils, and money.

The fact that, despite frequent grumbling, people did not consider their hardships senseless or hopeless made it easier to bear them. Neighbors often came to spend the evenings with us. As crowded as our quarters seemed to us, they seemed spacious and quiet to those who had only one room and a larger family. They would come, looking pale and tired, with no physical vitality. But when they started to talk about their work, the Five Year Plan, and the future, a fanatic fire lit their eyes. They sat with

Louis for hours around our table drinking endless glasses of tea and indulging in an orgy of figures. Once, after an especially hard day, I lost my temper and blew up;

“Will you stop talking dead figures! Have you forgotten that there are human beings in this world? Talk about them!”

They were shocked by my outburst.

“But don’t you see, this is exactly what we are doing,” said one, and they returned to their passionate figuring.

These figures meant schools, theaters, books, hospitals, they meant plenty and contentment to all, they meant unheard-of working and educational opportunities. They meant a promise to make the Soviet Union the first country where everyone, without exception, would enjoy whatever life can give to a human being, and then, of course, the rest of the world would follow the Soviet example. With this aim in view no sacrifice seemed too big. The harder one worked, our Soviet friends said, the quicker the promise of a bright Soviet future was going to be fulfilled.

Chapter 9

The fifteen families who lived on the two floors of our house reflected almost every phase of Soviet life. To know them intimately the way I did helped me to understand this life and to understand how the Russians came forth victorious and with unbroken spirit from the extreme privations of the first Five Year Plan.

There was an old couple: their daughter had died in the famine of 1921, her husband had been killed two years earlier in the civil war. Two orphans survived them. The grandparents took them to Moscow where the old man worked as a cobbler. He and his wife, like many working-class Russians of that generation, were both illiterate. In their youth, education had been beyond their reach. Now their granddaughter was in her first year in Medical College and their grandson was graduating from high school and would enter college next year. The two old people would tiptoe into the room and scarcely breathe when their grandchildren sat over their books. What if there wasn't enough food and clothing?

A young worker's family on our floor had two small children and a third had just been born. The five of them lived in one room. The father attended school in the evening in order to become a skilled technician. The young mother got all the necessary instructions for proper feeding and the baby's regimen at a community child-care center. But, in order not to disturb the neighbors and her husband in his studies, she fed the baby and picked it up whenever it cried. The baby yelled the moment it was put down. The poor woman dragged it along wherever she went and, since there were no baby carriages, carried it in her arms. She would leave the two others locked in the room and would return from shopping breathless with anxiety. But one never heard a word of complaint from her. Not because, as a foreign friend who once met her said, Russians are less civilized and don't mind hardships, but because she had an unshakable faith in the future.

"In another year or two," she used to say to me, "we will get a new apartment with a bathtub and kitchen stove all for ourselves, and there will be a kindergarten in the house for the children. My husband will make more money, and everything will be so good. Just another year or two."

Next to her room was the room of a carpenter, his forty-five-year-old wife, and an only son who was our boys' friend. We shared our love for the Zoo with them and often went there together. Vassilissa, the carpenter's wife, told me her story. Until 1925 they had lived in a village. Her husband had farmed, now he worked in a factory. She had had seven children: Six had died in infancy; only her last child survived.

“When a child died in a village,” she said, “it was as natural as when day turns into night. One was not even supposed to cry when a baby died. Why was that? Was it because we were told that our lives were in God’s hands and that we were not to question His deeds? Or because children didn’t cost money like a horse or a cow, and one could get more of them? Or because children dying young had always been as much part of a peasant’s life as a drought or a storm? I was unhappy over the deaths of my babies but there was no one I could even talk to about it. My own mother said that it is forbidden to cry over a newborn baby when it dies. When this one, Shurik, was to be born, I was so sick I almost died. Andrei [her husband] took me to the hospital in the nearest town. The others were born at home; my mother helped deliver them. In the hospital the doctor, a woman, told me that none of my babies would have died if I had known how to take care of them. I cried for days and nights thinking of them and made a vow that Shurik should not die if I could help it. I nagged at Andrei until he agreed to move to Moscow. A year later a baby clinic was opened in our village but I might have lost the boy during this year. There was not a thing the doctor told me to do that I didn’t do for Shurik, as hard as it was at times. And here he is, as healthy and clever as any child in the neighborhood.”

She was attending an evening school and tried to educate herself, so as not to lag behind her boy. When he was free they went together to the Zoo or to the Planetarium, the museums, or movies. She never complained about the material hardships of her life. If peasant babies did not have to die any more, if they could get as good an education as anyone else, if she was as respected as the wife of a doctor or teacher, could anything be wrong with Soviet life?

Another of my neighbors was tiny frail Zinaida Antonovna, a librarian, who had met and married her husband in Siberia, where they had both been exiled by the czar. He had died in 1918 of typhus. Three children were left. She also supported an invalid sister. Sickness and tragic events pursued the family. Zinaida’s place of work was far from the house and still farther from her food store. Early every morning before work and again after work she crossed the city in overcrowded streetcars to buy her food rations. At home she had to produce a meal in our primitive kitchen and launder and mend the family’s clothes. Yet she could laugh. She was far from depressed or wretched. She often came to sit with us in the evening with her knitting or mending, and took an active part in political conversations. Her body was emaciated but her spirit sparkled. She had never thought in her youth that she would witness the Russian revolution. In the NEP years she had begun to lose hope that the revolution was really going to fulfill its promise. She was elated now. “What are a few thin years,” she would say, “if a new world is being built?”

A large Jewish family from Minsk lived next door to us. The young people worked in factories and offices, went to college, and participated in all activities open to Soviet youth. They took it for granted and were not conscious of the fact that a mere twelve years ago Jews had been disfranchised pariahs. Between the parents a conflict raged. The father was devoted to Zionism and to his religion. He resented the Soviet

government's hostile attitude to both. His wife said that no one could interfere with her religion; it was within her. For the rest, "Nothing the Soviet government does can be wrong with me," she said. "Haven't the Bolsheviks put an end to pogroms? Aren't my children as good as anyone else in the Soviet Union?"

A middle-aged literary critic lived in our apartment. Before the revolution he had held a well-paid job in a large publishing house. The material comforts and niceties of life he had enjoyed then were gone from him now. But he yielded to none in his loyalty to the Soviet regime. He was a mild, sensitive man and had been deeply troubled by the injustices and oppression of the czarist regime. The equality which the revolution had brought to the people, the spread of education, and the sense of dignity which the Russian masses had never before known in history was something he appreciated enough to forget his own discomforts. He had, however, a great nostalgia for the things he lacked. He missed, for instance, the peace and privacy of his former apartment with his study full of books. He missed the highbrow literary and philosophical discussions of the old days. When we played Tchaikovsky symphonies on our victrola he would knock at our door, and then sit in a corner with dreamy eyes. He would divert literary conversations from modern authors to old classics. He recited Russian poetry to our boys and insisted that I teach them history.

On this subject he once got into a fierce argument with another neighbor, a high-school teacher. History was not taught in Soviet schools. He contended that we could not understand the present and plan the future unless we knew the past well. The high-school teacher expressed nothing but contempt for Russian history and, faithfully following the party line, as she always did, denied that the Soviet Union had anything to learn from czarist Russia.

"There was nothing but oppression and exploitation and brutality. Russia was built on blood and slavery. We don't need to burden our children with details of that period. What they have to know is who was fighting for freedom and this we teach them without history lessons. They know the names of Stepan Razin, Pugachov, the Decembrists, and the other pre-revolutionary champions of the masses. As far as our young generation is concerned, Russian history started in November, 1917."

I disagreed with her on many subjects. Soviet Russia was plagued with child delinquency. Adults were rarely at home. Most of them worked and the others were away for many hours in quest of food and other essentials. After school children were left entirely to themselves. In the evening, exhausted from work or standing in food lines, adults had little time to teach their children anything. I believed that the school had to give the children more than academic studies.

"We have too few schools and teachers, and we are therefore compelled to work in two, often three, shifts," the high-school teacher objected. "The prescribed curriculum is too big as it is for the few hours we have at our disposal. So who can think of such luxuries as teaching the children cleanliness and good manners? Besides, the children come to school only to learn. They can get spiritual and political guidance in the Pioneer and Komsomol organizations."

“Do you sincerely believe,” I said, “that political discussions, Five Year Plan figures, and facts about new industrial plants which the Komsomol and Pioneer organizations give the youth are sufficient to feed a child’s imagination, build his character, and keep him out of mischief?”

“These figures and facts are sufficient to fire any child’s imagination. They certainly do,” the teacher replied.

“I am sure,” I persisted, “that there are plenty of children who need more than political dogmas and production charts. Why don’t you give them adventure books and films, biographies of humanitarians, ideas on moral and spiritual values? Don’t you think that some children need these?”

“Our children’s hearts are filled with deep devotion to the revolution and the Soviet Union. Like all other Soviet citizens they know that in the future they will have all they miss and they will patiently wait.”

Such an echo from a Pravda editorial usually ended every argument.

Sometimes our foreign visitors participated in these round-the-tea-table discussions. Our rooms, modest even from a Moscow point of view, were, during the tourist season, the center of great social activities. Moscow had become the magnet for thousands of visitors from all over the world. Many American tourists brought letters of introduction to Louis. If he made an appointment with two people, at least five would show up. If the Intourist (Travel Agency for Foreigners) or VOKS (Society for Cultural Relations with Abroad) asked Louis to receive a “small” group, it most likely turned out to be not less than twenty. Once he expected a group of university professors. At the appointed hour there was a commotion in our small street. There, right under our windows, surrounded by excited kids and curious adults, a packed bus disgorged its passengers. The chairs of the entire house had to be collected to seat them in our living room.

When we introduced our Soviet friends and neighbors to foreign visitors, the Russians were only too happy to have an eager audience. One evening a visitor known for his unfriendly attitude to the Soviet Union criticized the Soviet government for shamelessly robbing the Russian people by selling abroad its paintings, old Gobelins, crown jewels, etc. A neighbor, forgetting his good manners, burst out:

“Stop shedding crocodile tears! What do you care about the Russian people! If you ask me, I reproach the government for not selling abroad all the jewels and paintings, instead of our butter and eggs. I would gladly give away all our Rembrandts so that our children might not starve. What difference does it make in what museum a picture hangs. You do not care about the crown jewels or our paintings. You are looking for an excuse to call us criminals and barbarians!”

An American girl was once the object of another temperamental explosion. The girl discussed sex, a subject dear to the heart of many American tourists. The Russians felt that they had solved this problem for themselves and hardly ever talked about it, and certainly not in a crowd among strangers. The American girl was outraged because the night before, at a party, a Russian woman had objected to her husband taking the girl home after she had been flirting with him all evening:

“Who ever heard of such a thing? Why, if it happened in New York, the wife would be a good sport about it and would most probably look for someone else to take her home. And here, where women are supposed to show the world an example of freedom, they are as old-fashioned and puritanical as my New England grandmother.”

“Yes, we are puritanical,” said Galya, a young woman lawyer, “if it is puritanical to love the man of one’s choice, without the interference of law, public opinion, or family. Nobody prevents me from marrying another man every year or every month, but while I am with my husband I love him and I don’t want another. Nothing but love keeps a Soviet couple together. We don’t marry for position or for fur coats or diamonds—[^]which is more than you can say. And if you are so bored with one another that after a party you want to go home with another man or woman, give me our puritan marriages any time! ”

“Wait, Galya, let me explain to the foreign comrade,” said her scholarly husband, also a lawyer. “We were not puritans the first years after the revolution. Czarist Russia had very rigid family laws. Women enjoyed few legal rights. To dissolve a marriage required unsavory procedures which prevented many unhappy couples from separating. The revolution broke the old chains and gave people the feeling of boundless freedom. To many it meant freedom from all personal responsibilities and obligations, which, as you know, means a heavy load for the weaker partner, the woman. That was no good either. It took a few turbulent years to bring us where we are now. We live normal family lives^j that is more to our taste than frivolity. Some men and women, of course, want to live differently. They are free to do it. Our laws protect children. This is the most important thing. We have no chains and we feel free. As Galya said, nothing but affection keeps a Soviet couple together.”

The poor American girl was also attacked by a countryman, an American engineer who scolded her for misrepresenting American family life and assured us that she talked only for a small group of big-city sophisticates.

Education was the subject of another clash in our bu[^] apartment. A visitor, a German professor, deplored the fact that Soviet education had fallen so low, that the world heard little of Soviet scholars, and that German universities had no Russian students at all now whereas they used to have many.

“You ought to know, Herr Professor, where our scholars are,” said our high-school teacher neighbor to whom he had directed this complaint. “Germany is full of Russian professors who turned their backs on Russia in 1917, 1918, and 1919 when the people rose and clamored for education. And why should our students go to your universities? We have opened our doors to Jews and other minorities who before had to look for education elsewhere. It is true, we probably have neglected our scientific achievements for a while. It was hard to find substitutes overnight for all the deserters. The few who remained were given possibilities which they never dreamt of before. But there were too few of them. We were too busy teaching millions to read and write, and therefore may have neglected Greek history and mediaeval architecture. We started by making four years of school compulsory, then it rose to seven. Now we are making it ten. And

afterwards—only the sky is the limit. You will hear from us later. I assure you that you will have little cause to grieve over the death of Soviet science.”

Frequently, in a mixed group of foreigners and Russians one caught an expression of pity in foreigners’ eyes when they looked at the poorly clad, pale-faced Russians. True enough, Russians often cast envious glances at a foreigner’s clothing or a fountain pen or wristwatch. But there was no reason for pitying the Russians. These were the years of the great depression—1929 to 1932—and the Soviet press published reports, confirmed by foreign visitors, of homeless, jobless men sleeping in New York subways or Berlin doghuts, of young and old looking hopelessly into a black future, and of governments unable to cope with the situation. The Russians felt that, despite their present poverty, their outlook was incomparably

brighter. They were sure that their troubles would be over soon. They often told foreigners that they felt sorry for them because there was no fight and no hope in them. The Russians were fighting, and in a fight where victory meant prosperity, security, freedom, and education there is passion and exhilaration, even if there is no meat, no soap, and no shoes.

Chapter 10

Conditions in our house in Moscow became worse every day. Since the house was to be torn down, the house committee was given no funds for repairs. Defective plumbing, burst pipes, broken floor boards, and windows and doors which refused to open or close made life most uncomfortable. Conflicts and quarreling increased.

The boys' health was alarmingly undermined and there was little hope for their complete recovery under these conditions. The idea arose of sending them to a friend in Berlin until we got a new apartment. As always, when my privileged position as an American correspondent's wife permitted me to do something which other Russians could not do, I was reluctant to take advantage of it. For some time I could not make myself use the special food store for foreigners. And now again for quite a while I was unable to decide. Our Russian friends, to make the decision easier for me, assured me that in my place they would do it without hesitation. ^'Don't we," one said, "send our children to the Caucasus and Crimea, or to relatives in villages, wherever the climate is milder and the food better?" Finally, we decided to go. We distributed all our wearing apparel to friends and neighbors, and with only the clothing on our backs and long request lists from Soviet friends for things to bring back, I left Moscow with the boys in May, 1931.

In the train I delivered a lecture to the boys on how to behave and what to say or not to say abroad. It did not help much. We first went to Latvia to visit my mother, and when a decorative-looking Latvian officer entered the train at the border, the boys excitedly pointed their fingers at him and yelled right into his face:

"Look, mama, a live fascist."

It took them a while to learn that not everybody outside Russia was a fascist.

On the first morning, in Riga, when the hotel maid announced: "Madam, breakfast is served," Yura flashed with anger: "Mama is not a madam, she works!" In the hotel dining room Vitya, to the amusement of all present, asked: "Why do they paint the bread white. ^" He had forgotten how white real white bread could be.

Both boys flared up whenever people made derogatory remarks about the Soviet Union or pitied them for having to live there. In the presence of others they behaved as if shop windows full of toys, food, shoes, clothing were the most usual sight to them. Only when we were alone did they permit themselves to show their delight. Once, when an acquaintance offered them a ham sandwich saying; "You probably haven't seen this for years," Yura said quietly: 'Why, we had rolls and ham every morning for breakfast in Moscow," which was the first lie I ever heard him say.

A man in Riga said in the boys' presence that the czar was bad enough but at least he did not make the whole country starve as the Soviet government now did. Yura

C 78 3 got terribly excited. His eyes burned and his body shook when he delivered a speech which became the talk of the town.

"Yes, you know how bad the czar was and how he made people suffer. But all of you, Germany, England, France, the whole world, gave him money, and helped him to build factories and railroads. But when the czar was gone and the people took over, you wanted your money back and wouldn't help a bit. If the czar had wanted to buy all the machinery the Soviet Union needs now for the Five Year Plan, you would have let him have it and would wait for your money. But now you don't wait even a day. Soviet people starve only because they have to sell the food and pay you for all they buy. And they must buy machines. Because if the Soviet Union didn't do that, it couldn't make anything itself and would have to buy everything from you. And you will only see them what they need if they do what you want them to do. And what you really want, is to have the czar back and make the workers slaves again. Because if you didn't, you would help the Soviet Union now, and then the little children would have enough to eat."

By the end of his speech his eyes were full of tears, and those present were deeply moved by the passion with which a seven-year-old boy had expressed his political beliefs.

I had not been abroad for over four years. The first impression of the outside world was one of great prosperity compared to the Soviet Union. People were well dressed, the stores were full of goods, and all of life seemed neat and orderly. But beneath the surface there was a great deal of despair and worry. More than a few people hostile to communism and to the Soviet system envied me for living there.

"You possess the most precious thing in the world," a Polish mother said to me, "faith in the future. Even if conditions are bad now, Soviet mothers do not worry about the future of their children. They know that there will be education and jobs for them. I don't sleep nights worrying how to prepare a place in this world for my children."

I was shocked to see how the Communist conformity of spirit had spread abroad. A few weeks before I got to Berlin from Latvia, a Soviet author, Chumandrin, arrived there. He was one of the most ardent supporters of the RAPP, the Association of Proletarian Writers, which then had the full support of the Communist party and the Soviet government as against the other writers who were non-Communists and non-proletarians. He had brought to Germany the latest party-line instructions on literature and art. In the few weeks he spent in Berlin a literal translation of the Soviet official language became part of the daily terminology of German literary Communists and fellow travelers. And though the meaning of the words had little bearing on the problems of German literature, Soviet sympathizers in Germany obediently parroted them.

I well understood that the Soviet Union was for many the only light and hope in a dark world. I understood that face to face with bitter hostility and criticism,

Soviet Russia's friends were apt to defend whatever she did even against their better judgment. I did that myself. But I was unable to understand, then or later, how thinking intellectuals could, in one short moment, adopt words and ideas which they had never heard before and which were completely alien to them, simply because these words came from Moscow.

A German friend once took me to a meeting of his Communist group. I received permission to attend as a "Soviet comrade." I was so eager to go that I took advantage of the fact that they thought me a Communist. The meeting was a terrifying copy of Moscow. Two young Communist members of the group had recently attended a gathering at which a Trotskyite was present. The Central Committee ordered their expulsion and they were notified of it at this group meeting. The group membership had never been consulted. The accused members were not given the right to say a single word in their own defense. When one man present had enough courage to say that this was a h^ handed, tndemocratic procedure, the chairman of the meeting looked straight into his eyes and said slowly and impressively:

"Comrade ... I would advise you not to align yourself with our class enemies if you do not want to share their fate. I may be obliged to bring your case to the attention of the Central Committee."

The words fell like cold steel. A funeral atmosphere filled the room. Freedom and independence were buried right there under my eyes. I was told later that this was a historic meeting. Never again did a member of this group, or any other German Communist group, dare to question an action, unjust and cruel though it might be, that came from the Central Committee. For a hint of disagreement with the Moscow party line, people were thrown out of the party to which they had given their hearts and enthusiasm and which meant life itself to them.

I stayed in Berlin several weeks until the boys were settled. Then I returned to Moscow. I found our apart ment in an uproar. One of our neighbors, Kseniya, was a high-strung neurotic woman who could only be happy with excitement around her. She had brought a third husband into the room in which her former second husband and a son from her first marriage lived in a comer behind a linen closet and a Japanese screen. After the novelty of this exciting situation faded, she took a hand at intriguing in the apartment. While I was away, she quarreled "with everyone and decided to take revenge on all with one stroke. She dug into the past and the present of all tenants and sent a denunciation to the authorities accusing each family of one crime or another. She did not even spare an old invahd who, in order to exist, occasionally sold us a bag of potatoes or onions which her grandchildren sent her from their village. The GPll, acting on Kseniya's report, found the old woman guilty of "food speculation" and fined her. Another neighbor, whom Kseniya accused of a "bourgeois" past, lost her job.

Two evenings after my arrival there was a knock at our door. Without waiting for a "come in," without wiping their feet and taking their caps off, four men walked in. They rudely demanded my name, occupation, etc. When I asked them who they were and what they wanted, they did not answer.

“Do you have any contact with abroad?”

“Of course,” I replied jauntily.

“What kind?”

“I exchange letters, telegrams, speak over the phone, receive money and packages,” I said.

“Well, well,” the man uttered, with the expression of one having laid his hands on an important international spy, and he wrote out every one of my words.

“And with whom do you exchange letters, telegrams, and phone conversations?”

“With my husband, my two sons, my mother, sister, and numerous friends.”

“What is your husband’s occupation? ”

“An American correspondent. If you wait, you can talk to him. He will be in any minute.”

They almost sank into the floor with embarrassment.

“There must be a misunderstanding,” they said, taking off their caps and getting ready to rush out. “We seem to have been misinformed about you.”

They were in a hurry to get away before Louis returned, but I made them tell me that they were investigating a report about me. I knew well who had “misinformed” them. I was too disgusted to report Kseniya. But had I been a Soviet citizen without the protection of an American husband, such close contact with relatives abroad might have cost me a high price.

Though conditions in our apartment had deteriorated, our personal life in it was somewhat eased by the absence of the boys and also by our new maid, Niura, whom I engaged after Frossya got married. Niura came from a village near Kalinin and was an exceptionally cheerful, smiling girl, quick, efficient, and of incalculable help in the household. Her great readiness to help was exceptional even among Russians, and her sweet temper smoothed out many a conflict among the neighbors. Nevertheless, I was of course beside myself with joy when we were informed in the fall of 1932 that we were to get a new apartment.

A tall, long-bearded official took us around and showed us several available apartments in Moscow. We liked best a still unfinished eight-story modern apartment house in a famous old residential section where the old intellectual aristocracy of Moscow used to live and which was often described in Leo Tolstoi’s novels. Louis had one facetious objection to this apartment. The street name was hard to pronounce.

“How am I ever going to spell Sivtsev Vrazhek to a good American over the telephone?” he complained. We chose the apartment nevertheless.

In November, 1932, tenants began to move into the new house though it was far from finished. Instead of staircases there were rough, loose boards. There was no water yet, nor the double windows which make a Moscow apartment inhabitable during the winter. But the families who moved in under these circumstances had lived in such misery before that the new incomplete house seemed like paradise.

In the middle of January there were stairs and water in the house, but I waited an additional fortnight for window glass, which could not be gotten anywhere in Moscow

despite the help which the Foreign Office and the Moscow Soviet gave me in searching for it. Finally the glass was procured. Nothing stood in the way of my moving into the new house. The boys were still in Berlin. Louis was in London en route to the United States.

Forty-eight hours before moving day, the Housing Department of the Moscow Soviet telephoned and asked my co-operation in a delicate matter. The Soviet had assigned our old apartment to a Sobolev family which was to be reunited after several years of living in separate rooms in different parts of Moscow. But the Aviation Trust, which had permission to tear our house down and build a new one in its place, objected to the Sobolevs moving in, because that would mean that the Trust would have to provide the Sobolevs with living quarters when the house was torn down. The Aviation Trust intended, therefore, to quarter one of their men in our rooms the moment I left them. Once he was in occupation, it would take months of legal suits and negotiations to evict him. Meanwhile, however, the Sobolev family's former rooms had already been given to other people, so if they didn't get my apartment they would be left homeless. My sympathies were on the side of the Sobolevs and I promised to do what I could.

I had to make a secret of the day of my moving so that the Aviation Trust could not find out and rush its employee in. In fact, the Moscow Soviet advised me to stay in my apartment until the Sobolevs had actually occupied my rooms. Niura and I packed our belongings behind locked doors and camouflaged the trunks and boxes with shawls and rugs. In the afternoon of the last day, the Sobolev family slipped into our rooms with a couple of suitcases. They were father, mother, son, and daughter. They behaved like children at the prospect of living together again. They did not care about the dark kitchen, overflowing toilet, quarreling neighbors, or anything else. The two young Sobolevs stayed in our rooms overnight, and I stalled off the usual visits of neighbors under the pretext of a severe headache. We packed the rest of the things, prepared everything for next morning's moving, and went to bed.

At nine in the morning six husky men armed with clubs planted themselves outside my door and I heard someone give them orders not to permit anyone under any circumstances to move into our apartment even if they had to use force. These were the Aviation Trust men. We phoned Sobolev, who was getting ready to come with his truckload. He implored me not to move until he arrived. Mr. Trone, the General Electric representative in Moscow, and his wife arrived in their car to help me move, as well as a young friend, Motya. At 10 a.m. the Foreign Office truck came to take my belongings. To gain time until the Sobolevs should appear, I asked the drivers to move us in two trips. They were paid by the hour and this was the first time in their experience that anyone insisted on a second trip, especially since all our worldly possessions would hardly fill half of their truck.

Now another difficulty arose. The keys of our new apartment would not be delivered to anyone except me. But if I went with the truck, the Aviation Trust people would take possession of my old apartment. The truckmen became impatient; they had another job to do and refused to wait any longer. What to do? Motya was an efficient young

man and I thought that he would be able to get the new keys for me. But it was the thirty-first and he had to be in his office before noon so as to get his bread card for the next month. By this time I had embraced Sobolev's case and my own and decided to fight it out to a victorious end. I promised Motya to supply him with bread for a whole month if he went with the truck. He went, and got the keys. But, being in a great hurry, the truckmen were back in less than an hour. Still no sign of Sobolev. A chest of drawers, a trunk, and four chairs was all that remained for the second trip of the truck. The moving men refused to wait one more minute. They seized the things and were ready to leave. Motya had to go to his office. Besides, the superintendent of my new house had warned him that the only person to whom he would give the keys for the second unloading would be myself.

There was nothing left for me but to go. The two young Sobolevs broke out in sobs. Trone had tears in his eyes looking at them. Our nerves were strained to the highest pitch. I slowly started to walk toward the door, when suddenly there was commotion down the hail. The door was thrown open. Several militiamen took posts in the corridor, and in the free passage between them two moving men, preceded by the triumphant Sobolev, started to carry in their furniture. We all laughed, cried, danced, and embraced one another. Then the Trones took me, Niura, the victrola and records, our typewriters, cameras, and flower pots in their car and off we went to the new apartment.

The place was sunny and friendly. Everything shone with cleanliness. After the dilapidated ceiling and torn wallpaper of the old apartment, the walls painted in bright light colors seemed unbelievably clean. The kitchen with a real sink, but most of all the bathroom, seemed heaven. And it was our own apartment, to be shared with no other family! When I crossed the threshold, I felt so happy that I was unable to control my feelings. I cried. We were hardly at home half an hour when there was a knock at the door and in came our English friend, Marie Seton, fresh from London with a huge smoked ham and a whole Swiss cheese which Louis had given her for me. A moment later George Andreichin, a Macedonian revolutionist who had become a Soviet citizen, arrived with wine and vodka. The Trones had brought a lunch basket along and we had a delightful housewarming feast amid bundles and trunks, entertained by Marie's new records.

After the visitors left, Niura and I worked throughout the night until we had every picture, every toilet article, every bit of clothing, all the books and household apparel in place. We were both drunk with joy, and walked from one room to another, unable to grasp fully the happiness of living in a big clean place all by ourselves. Niura felt exactly as I did. When I went to bed, I felt sad for a moment thinking of my broken illusions. In 1927, I had come to the Soviet Union dreaming of a new life on communal lines, in a communal apartment with a communal kitchen and people working and living together. And here I was, six years later, undescribably happy because there was a door between me and the other people. In the beginning I used to stroke the door softly like a dear friend. For almost a week I did not leave the apartment. I did

not want to miss a moment of the joy it gave me. I once woke up at night in terror that it all was a dream, that there was no new apartment, that I still lived in the dirt, darkness, and meanness of the old place. I never knew that a new apartment could bring so much happiness.

My own room was four rooms in one. The corner with the couch was my bedroom, the corner with a desk my study, the corner with a big round table was the family dining room, and altogether it was the family living room. Louis's and the boys' rooms were fixed as bedroom-studies. It is a crime to have an unused room in Moscow. So until the family came back there was frequently someone in their rooms resting for a day or two or doing some writing or simply reading a book or having an undisturbed sleep in luxurious privacy. A friend came often with his five-year-old son for a restful day to "The Fischer Sanatorium," as he called it. The first time the little boy came, he was bewildered. He had never before walked in an apartment freely from one room to another through open doors. All his life he had lived with his parents and sister in one room.

During the first few weeks in the apartment there were always workers in it fixing one thing or another. Watching them work I marveled that, despite that inefficiency and slowness, our house and thousands of other houses, factories, dams, railways, etc. were being built. The workers would fuss around for hours, smoke cigarettes, admire the apartment, flirt with Niura, go away, get paid, and everything remained as it was before. For two days, two workers repaired the sink. Finally, they found that there was nothing they could do, and went away leaving the sink fixtures disconnected. At 4 a.m. the downstairs apartment was flooded. Once a man came to attach the toilet seat and put it on backwards. Another worked for hours to set it right. One worker reached for something in the kitchen by stepping on the new gas stove with his heavy boots. It broke. Another man came to install a new stove. Occasionally American visitors with their highly developed taste in housing pointed out huge rusty nails in window frames, cracks in the walls and ceiling, defects in the floors, and so on. None of this could dampen my pleasure over the apartment.

But one event dimmed my joy. I moved in on January 31, 1933. The day before Hitler had come into office in Germany. When I thought of Hitler's triumph over the German republic and that everything civilized and progressive in Germany was being trampled upon and butchered, tears came to my eyes and even the new apartment was no consolation. My only comfort was the thought that Hitler could not last long. I did not doubt for a moment that all the good forces of Germany, as well as of the whole world, would unite and destroy the evil Nazi menace. I would not have believed anyone who told me that the world would stand by and even help Hitler prepare to destroy civilization and spread his poison over the face of the earth.

The friends with whom our boys stayed in Berlin had to go into hiding when Hitler came to power. The boys, with several other children, were hurriedly taken to Czechoslovakia by a young German girl and from there they traveled to Moscow.

Chapter 11

JN 1932 a slight relaxation in Soviet life began to manifest itself. The new tendency was heralded by a government decree which suspended the activities of RAPP, the Association of Proletarian Writers. For years the RAPP and its affiliates in other artistic fields dominated Soviet literature, films, painting, music, dancing, etc. Marxist theories, political slogans, and statistics of the Five Year Plan had taken the place of beauty, creative imagination, and genius in art.

To Louis and myself the liquidation of the RAPP was welcome news. We were both interested in Soviet literature and for years had been watching the deadening effect of RAPP upon it. Louis had adversely criticized the RAPP in several of his articles. But the way RAPP was abolished shocked us. It came literally overnight as a sudden government order. Not even the leaders of the RAPP knew about it in advance. The decree was followed immediately by vigorous attacks on these leaders as well as on all active members of the RAPP. They were accused of having ignored non-Communist and non-proletarian writers, of having judged writers by their political ideology rather than by their talents, and of having concealed their own inability behind political slogans. They had done all these things on explicit instructions from the party. Now they were punished for having faithfully obeyed those instructions. Later, during the purge, many RAPP members were arrested; some were shot.

Among the victims of the RAPP regime have been folk songs. They were supplanted by songs on the Five Year Plan made to order by composers and poets. In the summer of 1930 the Park of Culture announced a concert by a Ukrainian peasant chorus. The big hall was jammed because Ukrainian folk songs were always great favorites in Russia. One of the charms of the Ukrainian folk choruses was their bright, beautifully embroidered national peasant costumes with many-colored ribbons and beads. To our great disappointment, the chorus appeared in ill-fitting, coarse city clothes. Instead of the beloved folk songs we came to hear, they sang translations of new Soviet industrial songs. Between the songs a commentator, representing the RAPM, the equivalent of RAPP in music, analyzed each song at great length, stressing its political significance. Then he said:

“Now that you have heard the beautiful songs of the new free Ukraine, you will be able to judge how spiritkilling and poisonous were their old folk songs, which were created in order to lull the poor peasants into obedience so that the landlord could the better exploit them ...” and so on and so on.

When he finished this lengthy discourse, the chorus began singing our favorite Ukrainian folk songs. The singers became alive, their voices, movements, eyes vibrated.

Even their clothes did not seem ugly any more. The audience went berserk. They clapped, shouted, stamped their feet, and demanded endless encores. The embarrassed commentator permitted no encores.

After the abolition of the RAPP, the authorities not only brought back folk songs and all other folk arts; they began to stress their importance. At an official opening of an art exhibit which took place some time afterwards and to which the foreign colony was invited, Commissar of Education Kerzhentsev tried to impress on foreign newspapermen the greatness of Russian folk art and how important it was for the people to know and love it. In doing so—with passion—Kerzhentsev, a former Soviet diplomat, a true intellectual Soviet leader, used words and ideas which we had defended all along against the party liners who condemned folk art. Once again I marveled at the swift clicking of a Communist brain to a party-line zigzag.

At one of the many RAPP literary meetings I attended, Boris Pilniak, the well-known Soviet author, was the subject of an especially bitter attack. He was denounced as “bourgeois” and “counter-revolutionary.” He sat there, pale and unhappy, without saying a word. What was the use. Nothing he said could win the audience. No one dared oppose the RAPP which was, as everybody knew, the mouthpiece of the Communist party. But one man dared. V. Polonsky, a civilized Russian, the most prominent Soviet literary critic, stood up to defend Pilniak. He said that whatever Pilniak’s background and political opinions might be, he was a writer of talent and friendly guidance instead of vituperation might help him change his attitude; Soviet literature would greatly gain. He had hardly finished this sentence when up jumped Peluso, an Italian Communist whom I had seen at the Genoa conference in 1922, a Comintern official now. He shouted that

Polonsky had finally revealed his real face, that he was no better than Pilniak and did not deserve to be a critic of proletarian Soviet literature. The audience knew well that he spoke as a representative of the Comintern and dutifully greeted his words with applause. Polonsky did not finish his defense of Pilniak. He stood there, tall, handsome, with a Goethe head, his face gradually turning the color of his gray hair. He knew what Peluso’s words and the audience’s applause meant. He had tried to save a good Soviet writer. He thus ended his own brilliant career. Next day brought an attack on him in the press no less vicious than the one on Pilniak. He was the greatest literary critic Soviet literature had. To this very day, no one has taken his place. The attack finished him. Soon after this meeting, he made a trip to a rural town. He caught typhus there and died. His doctor said that if his body had not been weakened by weeks of mental anguish, he might have been able to resist the disease. Pilniak was rehabilitated after the abolition of RAPP. He was even permitted to visit the United States, the greatest proof of trust by the Soviet government.

Another storm center was Boris Pasternak, considered by many the greatest Russian poet since Pushkin. His verses were not easily understood by the masses. He lived in a world of his own and could only write about emotions and thoughts close to his heart. The political and economic developments around him were not the subjects of

his poems. He was, if not read by millions, loved, and admired by many thousands. During the supremacy of the RAPP, and to a slighter degree before and after too, he was frequently attacked as an enemy of the revolution who refused to write on current themes.

He persisted. This was not obstinacy. He was made in a certain way and could not change.

Louis and I once attended a literary "trial" where Pasternak was to explain why he wrote about nature, human emotions, and abstract heroism instead of current economic and political problems as other poets did. After several orators, all insignificant literary pigmies, had poured out poison and wrath on the character and work of the greatest living Russian poet, Pasternak was called upon to answer the accusations. His big blue-gray eyes were wide open but he hardly saw anyone. He looked above the crowd, obviously laboring under a thorough incapacity to collect his thoughts and to put them into plain prosaic words. Several times his lips, thick childish lips, opened as if ready to speak. Finally, he was able to say a few stammering words:

"I cannot write to order. I can only write what I want to write about. I can try to write differently but I don't think I will succeed."

His complete honesty was obvious to those of us who admired him. A girl next to us, with a Komsomol pin, whispered excitedly to her friend, a youngster, whose eyes were filled with sadness and pity for Pasternak:

"Look at his eyes! A real poet by the grace of God!"

In her excitement the young Communist forgot herself and slipped into the old-fashioned Russian definition of a true poet. But even she, despite her great emotion and admiration for Pasternak, did nothing more than whisper to her friend. The rest of the audience booed and protested, and after a few more malignant orations the meeting was closed. Pasternak was declared beyond the pale of Soviet poetry.

We talked to him after the meeting, if talking is the [95] word for putting questions to a person who does not realize that anyone is speaking to him. An intimate friend of Pasternak told us later that the poet was near suicide that night and had to be closely watched. If the RAPP had not been liquidated soon afterwards and the attacks on him stopped, the sensitive Pasternak might not have had the strength to live. His numerous friends and admirers were unable to fight for him as long as the RAPP had official party backing. Only after the government condemned the RAPP and its methods did they feel free to show their true feelings. The day when, after a long absence, Pasternak appeared again in public to read his poems, the large hall of the Polytechnical Museum was jammed full. For several minutes the applause and cheers prevented him from starting. For four hours he recited his original poems and translations from Georgian poets to an admiring audience which only let him go after all lights were put out in the hall at midnight.

The end of RAPP brought a fresh breeze into Soviet literature and art. Manuscripts and paintings put aside for years saw the light of day. Once more it was possible to paint a still life without the figure of a worker in it. Lyrical music, love poems, and

nostalgic folk songs were no longer regarded as caresses for the ears of the decaying bourgeoisie. Tchaikovsky was rehabilitated after a radio commentator declared that “we have to fight against the false tradition that Tchaikovsky wrote only decadent music. This is absolutely wrong.” Beethoven’s symphonies on the radio were no longer interrupted by a lecture on the importance of manure or the best way to feed cows: Soviet “commercials.”

Art and literature were encouraged by the government. Talented children and adults were given every opportunity to develop their natural gifts. Officially appointed talent scouts combed the country for geniuses. There were free scholarships for all who showed ability. No talent had to be wasted for lack of money or any other reason.

But Soviet art has never again, even after the iron grip of the RAPP was relaxed, regained the free expression it enjoyed during the first years of the revolution. It remained under the firm hold of the party and changed drastically with every twist of the party line. Writers and artists often rose and fell according to their ability to quickly adapt themselves to political changes.

Chapter 12

XHE slight relaxation which began to be felt in Soviet life in 1932 reached its culmination in 1933 when Stalin announced the successful end of the first Five Year Plan and the beginning of a new, prosperous, joyous era. The first Five Year Plan concentrated on making heavy machinery. It was immediately followed by the second Five Year Plan which promised to take care of the everyday needs of the Soviet people. The light consumers' industries started to work at high speed. The first signs of improvement were met by the Russians with great delight. Women who for four years had devoted their lives solely to the task of keeping the bodies and souls of their families together suddenly discovered that one of the main tasks of the Soviet government had become the gratification of their hungry desire for goods.

The production of women's clothes, hats, shoes, and accessories assumed uppermost importance. The overdressing and the color schemes were not always in the best taste. But for fifteen years Russian women had been cut off from the world of fashions. The younger ones had never had the experience of going into a store and choosing their clothing. They had worn whatever they could get. The chiefs of the clothing industry did not have much previous experience themselves. They were pleased to be able to produce something for women to wear and women were pleased to be able to buy it. Who cared about matching colors?

Press photographers went to dances in factories and schools and took pictures of dancing couples. The captions mentioned what dresses the girls were wearing. This was new in Russia and very exciting to those photographed. During the Red Square holiday parades on May I and November 7, in addition to tanks, War Commissar Voroshilov on a horse, and the popular Proletarian Division, pictures were taken of women marchers dressed in their best. When "heroines" of agriculture or industry were interviewed, they spoke of the number of dresses they possessed and talked of their favorite color and style. All this was a great source of pleasure for Soviet women, who, like all other women, like to be well dressed and like compliments about their looks. The authorities regularly reminded the public how easy and prosperous life had become compared to the past struggling years and encouraged people to be gay and to dress well. Zealous officials soon overdid this. A permanent wave, a silk dress, a manicure, or patent-leather shoes almost became earmarks of good Soviet citizenship.

It took foreign Communists a litde while to catch on to this. Some still came to die Soviet llunion garbed in yesteryear's Communist fashion. An American Communist once came to our house dressed in a worn-out skirt and her husband's old turde-neck sweater. A Russian neighbor asked me:

“How could she afford the expensive trip from Amer[99] ca if she is so poor as not to be able to buy a decent dress?”

She could not visualize a woman not buying nice clothes when the stores had them. She had to be told that this girl was an American Communist lagging slightly behind the party line. A year later this same girl brought an adequate wardrobe from a visit to the United States.

I had a friend, a beautician, who in 1929 had given up her profession for an office job. Now she returned to her hair work and was busier than ever. Among her clients were several elderly Communists. They resorted to her services not merely in order to make themselves younger looking or more beautiful. According to the old party line, their drab appearance had to demonstrate their allegiance to the proletariat and their contempt for the bourgeois world. The new party line made it equally necessary for these elderly women to reflect the country's prosperity by acquiring a permanent wave and a facial.

The new plenty was comparative. There actually never was a moment when the supply of goods in Russia equaled the demand. Even during the “fat” years, between 1933 and 1936, one had to stand in line several hours in an overcrowded, stuffy store to buy a pair of shoes, a man's suit, a piece of goods, a bed sheet, or a pair of stockings. Medicines, drugs, and many necessities were always hard to obtain. But Russians were not spoiled. They found it easy compared to the years before. Shoes, stockings, suits, books, furniture, textiles were being turned out in quantities hitherto unknown in Russia's history. But neither had Russia ever known such multitudes of buyers. Tens of thousands of villages with millions of peasants had for generations satisfied themselves with hand-made bast and felt shoes, hand-woven textiles, and home-made furniture. All these millions now wanted and could afford to buy manufactured shoes, ready-made clothing, victrolas, books, mirrors, silk stockings, bedroom sets, stationery, newspapers, and what not. Books printed in editions of several hundreds of thousands were sold out a few days after publication. Records were manufactured by the millions but to get them one had to wait many hours in line.

New dances were regarded for years as highly bourgeois, decadent and unworthy of a loyal Soviet citizen. When a Soviet playwright wanted to show the depravity of the capitalist world he introduced a scene showing the “decaying” bourgeois society: exquisitely dressed handsome couples dancing fox trots or languid tangos. A Soviet friend of ours used to say: “I wish we had some of this decay!” In those years, fox trots were danced in Moscow secretly behind locked doors to records played with soft needles. In 1933, when the new joyous era was proclaimed, dancing, like silk dresses and waved hair, became an officially approved part of Soviet life.

Dancing teachers became as popular as highly qualified engineers. Red Army commanders, aviators, high-school pupils and college students, factory workers, bus drivers, and high Soviet officials were caught by the craze of dancing. Factories, schools, academic institutions, military schools, and government offices ran classes in “Western Dances.” The Park of Culture opened dance classes to teach park visitors several kinds

of fox trots. When we took our American friends to the park, they were fascinated by the seriousness with which teachers and pupils clapped their hands to mark time and wrinkled their brows in an effort not to miss the subtle distinctions between American, French, Swedish, Hungarian, and other fox trots. Big cafes and restaurants opened dance floors. Several big movies had dance halls where, for an extra charge, visitors danced before and after the performances. (In Russia there are no continuous movie performances. After a picture has started, the doors are closed.) Factory clubs neglected their other social activities for dancing. A young man who danced well or who possessed a victrola with dance records was on top of the world. Foreign, especially American, dance records were valued at a high price.

The dance craze spared few people. Even old people took dancing lessons. A joke was current about a great scientist who could not find a job because he had no diploma from a dancing school.

In our home we used to dance before dancing became legal. We used to divide our friends into those who liked to dance and those who liked good conversation, and invited them on different evenings. It would have shocked Louis's serious Soviet friends in those days to find people in our apartment dancing "degenerate" dances. The new era changed all this. Our most highbrow friends wanted to be invited to the dance parties. To watch Russians dance in those years seemed funny to those who saw only the dancing. Their deadly serious approach to dancing did look odd. But there was something behind it which moved me deeply. Only a short while ago all these thousands of dancers in cafes, movies, clubs, and homes had not known a moment of relaxation and ease. They had worked beyond their strength, and eaten below their needs. Today they still worked hard, though less hard, but they ate well now—and they danced. This latter was to them the symbol of a new carefree life, and a proof that the hardships and sacrifices of the first Five Year Plan had not been in vain.

The improvement in life showed itself predominantly in food. The wooden imitations of cheese and sausage which had filled the windows of food stores together with cobwebs and dead flies made way for real food products of excellent quality. In place of empty milk bottles painted white one now saw bottles filled with good rich milk. Preserves and canned foods took the place of shoe-cream jars. Food rationing was abolished. Rebuilt and freshly painted or brand-new food stores, well stocked with a great variety of foodstuffs, invited an astonished and happy clientele. The stores were cheerful and clean, and the salesgirls wore new bright uniforms. They were patient and polite, which was quite different from the past years when a customer was almost unwelcome in a store. When a smiling, immaculately dressed salesgirl handed me a package neatly wrapped in paper and tied with a bright string, I was genuinely thrilled.

The food stores constantly improved their service. They introduced home delivery, accepted orders by telephone, and in large buildings like ours, at railroad stations, in big offices and factories, they opened booths which took orders for delivery. It is hard to convey to Americans who have always enjoyed the most perfect service to the public

what this meant to a Russian housewife, who had never in her life, unless she was a very rich woman before the revolution, seen any service to the public.

The government devoted much attention to the food industry. Sausage factories turned out dozens of different types of sausage; the dairies experimented with new kinds of cheese. Every day a new delicacy, like chocolate milk or a special kind of sweet cream, appeared in the stores. Frankfurters made their debut and were introduced to a generation which had never seen them by a loud campaign consisting of ads in the papers and posters in streetcars and buses. Food stores had special counters where “hot dogs” were sold with delicious rolls and strong Russian mustard. They soon became a favorite food of Moscovites.

It was hard to keep track of all the new, excellent varieties of bread and cakes. Candy stores were filled with endless varieties of hard candies and chocolate candies filled with fruit or liquor, candied fruit, gift boxes and animals and toys stuffed with sweets. Much of the display was vulgar and overdone, but it made people feel good. I once saw a woman picking out a birthday cake among dozens of dazzling creations, one slice of which would add inches to a waistline. The woman looked slightly bewildered. Suddenly her face lit up with a smile; she turned to me and said:

“I simply can’t get over it. Only a year ago I couldn’t celebrate my husband’s birthday. There was nothing to serve the guests. Now I can’t make up my mind what to buy, there is so much of everything.”

Poetry was plentiful, so was meat and fish. Housewives were happy to be able again to plan a meal instead of grabbing whatever came their way. The food industry was subject to strict sanitary regulations. The government employed a large medical staff to control foodstuffs. Wrapping paper was supplied in large quantities, and special personnel was trained to wrap packages. A few foods were sold in hitherto unknown cellophane wrapping. Certain food articles were still missing, some could have been of better quality, and the methods of retail stores could have been simplified. But after the meager years it all seemed like a miracle and few people criticized anything.

In September, 1933, I walked with an American friend past the Arbat market. There on the steps sat a peasant. At his feet lay the sack in which, every morning, he brought vegetables to sell and which was filled now with commodities he had bought to take back to his family in the village. He had taken off his bast sandals and rags which served him as socks, and was sunning his not too clean feet. In one hand he had a loaf of black bread, in the other a herring. He was eating what probably was his favorite food, which he had missed so badly in recent years. He had enough produce to sell and enough goods to buy. He was dirty just now, and his clothes were rags, but this was a weekday. On Saturday night, after his weekly steam bath, he would wear a clean shirt and look a different person. He seemed the picture of contentment.

But my American friend was indignant.

“It’s all lies you have been telling me!” she cried out. “Life hasn’t improved a bit. Look at this beggar sitting here and, like a beast, tearing his food apart with his hands

black with dirt. Look at his rags, at his filthy feet! Where is that improvement you wanted me to believe in?"

She probably was thinking of the lunch table of a prosperous Connecticut farmer. I was thinking of the same peasant a year or two earlier. Eating the herring with 1^ hands did not detract from his enjoyment of it, as long as he had the herring to eat. His children attended schools and colleges and were being taught a more civilized way of life. There was no cause to be alarmed.

To an American a jar of enamel paint in a store or an extra cake of soap in a hotel room is little reason for rejoicing. But everything which appeared after years of absence delighted the Russians. When the first dyes were sold again, we all went through an orgy of dyeing everything from dish rags to overcoats. When a store opened with a fair choice of paints, paint brushes, and wallpaper, Muscovites became expert interior decorators and indulged in the most fantastic color schemes. It meant a great deal to Russian women when mending yarn of different shades reappeared in the stores in 1934, and they no longer were forced to mend flesh-colored stockings with coarse white or black thread.

Being better fed, people were now more fit to stand evening courses after hard working hours. Those who earned little in the present knew that by increasing their skill and knowledge they were assured of a higher-paid job in the future. To the innumerable schools, colleges, technical schools, study groups in factories and offices were added radio courses in science, technology, languages, economics, literature, etc. Uncounted millions of adult Russians studied one subject or another. Foreign languages, accessible before the revolution only to the highest classes, were studied in towns and villages. English was in greatest demand. Many American tourists stayed in the Soviet Union to teach it. The government encouraged language studies.

In the summer of 1934 Yura and his friend Misha Wolf, the son of Friedrich Wolf, the anti-Fascist German writer, were swimming in the Moscow River. A Red Army man approached them, asked their addresses, and said that he would like to meet them some day. He soon telephoned and invited Yura to his army camp. It seemed strange to us that a grown-up man should be interested in an eleven-year-old boy. We asked him to come to the house and meet the family. He came, a charming Ukrainian peasant youth of 21, with pink cheeks and kind blue eyes. He had learned to read and to write his own language only a few years earlier and after that he had widened his knowledge through radio courses. Now he was starting a course in German and had difficulties with his homework. When he heard Yura and Misha speak German, he thought of enlisting their help. He enlisted mine instead. For two years he came twice a week and I went over his homework with him. He studied hard and was graduated with a reading knowledge of German. His parents, unable to sign their names even in their native Ukrainian, regarded their son as a higher human being, while he felt that his was the happiest life one could have.

The authorities boasted loudly about all innovations to make life easier and more attractive. Large illuminated street names giving the numbers of houses in each block

took the place of the old hardly visible street signs. In the boulevards, where Moscow's population spent their free time on benches under beautiful old trees, showerbath cabins were built. In these same boulevards playgrounds were opened for children, well supplied with varied entertainment for tiny tots as well as for teen-age youngsters. In the evenings, good variety singers and comedians, serious musicians and Chinese jugglers entertained the adult crowds. Every spring one of the boulevards was transformed into a huge, colorful book bazaar frequented by thousands.

In 1934 the first open-air cafe, gaily decorated with colorful parasols, drew huge crowds. The opening of each new cafe, indoors or open-air, was a big event.

Every one had its own color scheme. Cafe-au-lait, black and white, and light blue were popular colors. The waitresses' uniforms, the hangings, china, furniture, lamp shades, carpets, menus were all of the same color. The food and drinks in the cafes were excellent and nicely served. Russians quickly adapted themselves to the pleasant continental custom of spending a leisurely evening with friends over tea, coffee, or a drink. More than once I heard Russians say:

"If we can have this, why can't we have everything else they have in Paris, New York, and London?"

Moscow was then being literally dug up. Not only the main thoroughfares but small by-streets were widened and cobblestones gave way to modern pavements. Walking in Moscow was no more an agony for the feet. I recalled how Ernestine Evans, on a visit to Moscow in 1928, used to go out of her way in order to walk between the Grand and Metropole hotels. This was the only bit of paved street in Moscow and she enjoyed resting her feet on it. By 1935 hundreds of streets had been paved.

In addition to Moscow's favorite Park of Culture and Rest, numerous smaller parks were opened where visitors had the choice of a theater, movie, jazz band, symphonic orchestra, reading room, vaudeville, chess game, communal singing and dancing, and excellent food.

Quick-service shops were opened where people could have their suits pressed, a button sewed on, shoes shined. They were called "Ameiikanka," to suggest American speed. Barber shops and beauty parlors were opened in large buildings and in railroad stations. The latter were modernized and gorgeous rest rooms provided travelers with all comforts. Special rest rooms for mothers with children were equipped with toys and attended by trained nurses.

The stores competed in unusual decorations, often much too ornate and rich. Cosmetics and perfumes were packed in fancy boxes and bottles of fantastic design out of harmony with their modest contents. They were given romantic or revolutionary names: "The Bouquet of my Grandmother," "Red Moscow," "Dawn of Freedom," "To My Beloved."

Pet shops did a booming business. Russians love animals. During the hungry years it was hard to keep dogs and cats. Now there was food enough for animals too and the pet shops were well supplied with everything house pets required. Few Russians keep small dogs. When a Soviet cartoonist wants to picture a bourgeois woman in all her

“degradation,” he draws her with a lapdog. But the authorities encouraged the raising of service dogs. It was considered patriotic among Soviet children to train a service dog and donate him to the Red Army. A special organization as well as all pet shops gave advice on the feeding and training of dogs. In our neighborhood on the Arbat was a famous pet shop where for years our boys spent the greater part of their allowance and where Vitya received the necessary guidance for his German shepherd puppy. I often stood there in line to buy fish, bird, or cat food and this queue was the friendliest I knew. The semi-annual Service Dog Show in Moscow was a social event.

Near the Arbat pet shop was a large perfumery store luxuriously adorned. A tremendous effort was wasted on endless different ways of shaping and packing the same plain soap, the same lipstick or face powder. Next to this perfumery store was a huge tobacco store decorated in splendid Russian-Byzantine style, with reddish-blackgold woodwork and old Russian paintings. The store was at least ten times too large, I once told the manager what a variety of cigars, cigarettes, and tobacco an American tobacconist manages to get into his tiny store, plus candies, newspapers, a lending library, and probably a soda fountain. This man was so proud of his beautiful store that he bitterly resented my criticism.

With the inauguration of the second Five Year Plan in 1933, “Keep Smiling” became the motto of the day. Government leaders, actresses, babies, tractor drivers, dairy maids, tennis champions all showed their teeth in newsreels and illustrated magazines.

The fact that not all this brightness was spontaneous and that much of it was ordered from above disturbed only a few people. The great majority had gradually been trained to accept obediently anything which came from higher quarters. And they certainly had no objections to brightness. Life had become so good compared to the past years that questions of free thought or free art bothered only a small minority. The young generation, who had hardly any recollection of freedom, was not disturbed by its absence.

Occasionally one heard some criticism of the regimentation of spirit from foreign visitors. The foreign pilgrimage to the Soviet Union which started in 1929 had, by 1932, grown considerably. Every summer brought hosts of visitors from all corners of the world but mostly from the United States. The Intourist, the Soviet Travel Agency for Foreigners, often arranged interviews for its clients with American residents in Moscow. Louis was on their list, and a large part of our time during the tourist season was spent showing American visitors around. Louis entertained them with factory visits. I liked to show them nurseries and theaters, department stores and maternity hospitals, or simply walk with them in the streets or parks.

Some foreigners were little impressed by the improvements the Russians were so proud of; it still seemed to them a far cry from their comforts at home. Others would have preferred less economic progress and more freedom. They were those who objected to regimentation. But many were deeply impressed, some by the visible results, others by the enthusiastic faith and hope which inspired the Russians. It was interesting to watch the different reactions. To one, the most important thing in the Soviet Union

was the absence of exploitation of man by man. To another it was that gifted children were wards of the state until their talents had fully unfolded. To some, the lack of discrimination against any race or color meant the highest dignity of the human being. A medical man raved about socialized medicine which provided medical help for all and regular salaries for physicians. An American theater producer saw nothing but theaters where leisurely rehearsed plays were played to packed houses. Publishing houses which printed millions of books and paid fabulous sums to authors impressed foreign authors and publishers alike. Laboratories fitted with the most modern equipment at the disposal of scientists and the daring new industrial projects fired the imagination of visiting scientists and engineers. Some tourists enjoyed sidewalk talks with women standing in line at shops or with others selling brassieres at the busiest corners of the Moscow shopping district, or watching mothers and children on the boulevards and in parks. And all foreigners, sophisticated writers or simple souls, if their minds were open, felt the pulse of the Soviet Union's vigorous life.

Chapter 13

Our home life between 1933 and 1936 ran smoothly and pleasantly. The hardships of the first Five Year Plan had gone, and with them much of the excitement. A feeling of confidence took the place of the constant nervous strain. Life acquired an unaccustomed routine. Louis complained that things had become too quiet. Yet, whenever he was away for a few weeks, he found changes and improvements upon his return.

The entertaining of friends, always the most pleasant feature of our Moscow life, became even more extensive than before, thanks to our new apartment and the wealth of food. We were able to have really festive dinners. It still took about two days to shop and cook such a meal but I did not mind.

In the summer of 1934, I accompanied Louis on a tour around the Soviet Union with an Open Road group. When we returned, we invited Mr. Maurice Wertheim, a New York banker and member of the group, for dinner. In the morning Niura washed her shelves and closets, and meanwhile put all our china on the wide kitchen window sill. A draft opened the window and broke every plate, bowl, and cup we possessed, Mr. Wertheim never knew what hectic hours I spent that day to replace the china and have dinner on time. Two years earlier I would have had to either cancel the dinner or borrow dinnerware from neighbors, none of whom possessed more than two plates or cups of the same kind. We still had troubles, but the possibility of getting out of them was a great pleasure.

When I moved into the new apartment, it was impossible to make the slightest improvement in it. There was nothing to make it with. As soon as we were able to buy boards and nails, we had an enclosure built under the sink for the garbage pail, and shelves for paints, shoe creams, etc. We made a dish-drying board which sloped from the gas range down to the sink, and other such small conveniences which, to us, were no less an advancement in life than the latest Bendix washing machine to an American housewife. When the house superintendent heard of our improvements, he arrived with a draughtsman, who made drawings and asked for permission to send some tenants to have a look at them.

One year Louis brought colored hooks from New York for the kitchen and bathroom, and household gadgets for each of which he paid no more than a dime; I could have earned money by conducting tours through our apartment. People not only from our house but from neighboring houses came to marvel. A hook which did not get rusty from humidity, a new can opener, a potato peeler, a dish cloth which did not discolor—these never ceased to arouse the amazement of our Soviet visitors. Niura was envied by the housewives and maids of the neighborhood for being privileged to work in such an

unusual household. Only after I came to the United States did I realize how primitive and inadequate even our Moscow kitchen was.

We had hot water once a week during the first two years and twice a week after 1935. On those days everybody took a bath and invited friends who had no baths in their homes. On those days too the big laundry was done. We never sent our laundry out. It was washed in the kitchen, rinsed in the bathtub, and dried on the balcony in the summer and in the kitchen and bathroom in the winter. The bathroom had no window.

We had no ice box. Every evening during the summer we had to throw out all remnants of perishable food. The butter stood all night long under a tiny stream of water in the kitchen sink but even so it was a soft mass in the morning. Only a few new food stores had refrigerators. Few of the vegetable and fruit stores had ice.

Our foreign guests often marveled at the elaborate meals our maid Niura produced under what seemed to them the most primitive conditions. Niura, who had shown a great deal of skill under most unsuitable conditions, made a perfect job of it when conditions improved. From the cooks of the American correspondents Linton Wells and Lindsey Parrot who lived a floor above us she learned to make cranberry sauce, pies, southern fried chicken, home-made tomato juice, and other American specialties. Despite her deep admiration for us, we had one blemish in Niura's eyes. We liked "grass," as she called it: salads and raw vegetables. She mastered the art of preparing it but never ate any of it herself except a cooked Russian salad with a lot of sour cream.

Niura specialized in American dishes when Louis was around. She was devoted to all of us, but Louis inspired in her a respect with which no one could compete. He belonged to the very mysterious species of foreigner and besides, he was a man who had access to "big" people. Well-known writers and artists and important Soviet officials came to see him. She used to call in her friends when a special celebrity was around and let them have a peep through the door.

When we had company, Niura would come in and count the number of men and women. The American system of inviting an equal number of "couples" is unknown in Russia. Niura had to know how the sexes were divided because men were served tea in glass tumblers and women in cups.

When she knew ahead of time that we expected company, she prepared a variety of sandwiches taking pleasure in artistic color combinations. In Russia, sandwiches are meant to be real food, not tokens, and to serve them smaller than half a regular slice of bread would be considered inhospitable by Russians. Sandwiches were followed by cakes and sweets. When company came unexpectedly, which happened about four times a week, Niura's sandwiches were less artistic but she quickly baked a delicious Russian specialty, khvorost. Some visitors asked for it the moment they came to the door because Niura excelled in it. Louis could consume endless quantities of the light crunchy dough. He never drinks and always refused to eat anything prepared with alcohol. He never suspected that the secret of Niura's tasty khvorost was the vodka

she added to it. That was a wellkept secret between her and me, and Louis never knew it until he read it in the manuscript of this book.

Our visitors liked and respected Niura. When she answered their ring, they would stop in the vestibule and talk to her. Sergei Eisenstein, the famous movie producer, frequently left us for a long chat with her in the kitchen and he always made her giggle by saying that he really came to the house to see her but in order to fool people he spent some time with us. Often, when she brought in refreshments, a visitor would ask her a question and she would sit down with us. However, she never wished to have her meals with us, and we always thought it was artificial democracy to insist on it. Several radical Americans who set up house in Moscow thought that the maid ought to have the meals with them, and those maids told me that it made them feel uncomfortable. Our relations with Niura were truly friendly and human, but she felt happier when she had her meals alone in the kitchen.

If Louis was not in Moscow, Niura would sit down with us for big meals on holidays, on her birthday, or when her mother, sister, or brother came from the village to visit her. But she would never join us at a meal in Louis's presence. Often, she and I spent evenings together in my room. We knitted, sewed, listened to the radio, drank tea, and gossiped about her young men and our neighbors. She also joined me when some of my more intimate women friends came and we had no confidences to exchange. And I had the privilege of being invited by her into the kitchen when she entertained her friends. For these occasions she always had a supply of her own tea, sugar, and cookies, and she enjoyed treating me to it. I learned a lot about Russia from Niura and her friends.

Our boys were brought up to respect people's work and rest. They ran errands for Niura and helped her in her work, and they guarded her sleep, when she took a nap in her free afternoon, as they did their parents'. They never were conscious of any difference between her social status and ours. They knew that if I did not have Niura to take care of the household, I could not do my own work. This meant that Niura's work was equal to mine. The feeling of equality was very natural to her too. She was young and had never known another feeling. When her mother, a peasant woman, visited her for the first time, the three of us went to a movie. It was in the winter and the streets were slippery. Niura took my arm and gaily chatted with me as she did with her girl friends. Her old mother was outraged at her impudence and worried lest I be insulted. Walking slightly behind me she read a sermon to her daughter;

"This is not the way to walk with your barynia (mistress). You must walk behind her and only talk when she addresses you."

Niura answered with a burst of laughter. It seemed too funny to her. She laughed again when in the movie I treated both of them to an ice-cream cone and her mother refused hers saying:

"Oh no, how would I dare? Only gospoda (masters) eat ice cream."

Niura explained to me apologetically:

“You see, she still lives in her old world. She has never lived outside her village and thinks that you are like her former landowner’s wife. Mother wouldn’t dare to sit down in her presence.”

Niura’s jolly disposition was of invaluable help when, two years after we had occupied our new apartment, the whole house underwent complete repair. The walls of our apartment began to show cracks almost immediately after we moved in. Some of the cracks soon developed into holes. Fortunately, I had taken up photography as a hobby, and, by enlarging pictures to fit the shape of a new crack, I covered every one of them. Only intimate friends knew the secret of the numerous pictures on my walls and of the unusual forms of my prints.

When the holes began to threaten the safety of the house, the management took drastic measures. In most apartments the plaster of ceilings and walls was tom down. For weeks we lived in rains. Electric wires were cut, gas and plumbing was stopped. Our belongings were piled on the balcony where they were mistreated in turn by sun and rain. There was a shortage of labor, and the few available workers were constantly shifted from one apartment to another before finishing their jobs. This agony lasted six weeks and would have probably lasted longer, as it did in other apartments, if, in addition to Louis’s complaints to the authorities, Niura had not charmed the workers to such an extent that they came more often to our apartment than to any other. After six weeks the apartment was beautifully redecorated and Niura gave the plasterers, painters, and carpenters a grand party with a lot of vodka.

Chapter 14

Between 1931 and 1933, when our two sons were in Germany, they had forgotten their Russian and upon their return we sent them to the Moscow German school. It had exactly the same program as all Soviet schools but was conducted in the German language. Children of anti-Nazi exiles, of foreign engineers and technicians employed by the Soviet government, and of Russians who wanted their children to know a foreign language attended this school. Not having lost my interest in work with children and parents, I became active in the Parents' Council of this school, as well as of the Russian school to which Yura transferred in 1934.

Immediately after the 1917 revolution and even in the years when Russia's life was completely disorganized by revolution, famine, and civil war, children and schools were the great concern of the Soviet government. Many changes had taken place during these years in Soviet teaching methods as well as in the official relation to parents. At the beginning of the revolution daring experiments were tried out and the children had full freedom to organize their school life. Teachers had a subordinate position, and parents were completely ignored. During the first Five Year Plan, when everything collective was trumps, schools introduced group work, whereby a whole group instead of an individual pupil was responsible for studies. When it became clear that unless the teachers' authority and the individual pupil's responsibility were restored education would suffer, the teacher was again permitted to have his say on educational problems. Political guidance, however, remained in the hands of the Pioneer and Komsomol organizations, which worked under the direction of the Communist party.

It took longer for the parents to regain their authority. But by 1933, when my boys returned to Soviet schools, parents' rights were officially recognized. The explanation was that sixteen years after the revolution a generation of parents had grown up who could be trusted with the education of young Soviet citizens. I felt that another reason, never admitted officially, was that the school and party organizations were unable to cope with the problem of children's discipline. Appeals were issued now to parents to co-operate with the schools, and a decree was published making parents responsible for their children's misdeeds, whether it was pickpocketing, stealing apples, or hanging on to streetcars.

Parents' councils had always existed in Soviet schools, and their functions consisted chiefly in helping the schools to enforce the current party line. The key positions in these councils before 1933 were usually occupied by Communists, and the others had little to say. The 1933 government decree making parents responsible for their children's behavior changed this completely. The decree could not be carried out unless all parents

participated in decisions concerning the behavior of children, their regimen at home, and their recreation time. In 1933' when I started my career as a council member we, the non-Communist parents, were urged by the authorities to take an active part in school work.

Authorities, teachers, parents, and youth organizations had worked out an outline of a child's regimen, and, while the teachers made propaganda for it at school, the council members were active among the parents. Russians are not naturally inclined to organize their day. Twenty years of war, revolution, and economic struggle had not improved this inclination. Moreover, the fact that for years children were not encouraged to obey parents did not make it easier to introduce discipline into the children's home life. We worked hard to plan and carry out ways whereby children might get the maximum enjoyment and usefulness out of their day. But regimentation from above often interfered.

The Commissariat of Education had worked out rules under which children, after they came home from school, were to eat, then go out to play, and afterwards prepare their homework. The teachers were ordered to enforce these regulations rigidly. Many children, among them my own, preferred to do their homework first and then play. Others had language, music, or other lessons in the afternoon, and were unable to follow the rules. When pupils discovered that giving the teacher a truthful answer brought a reprimand, they told lies. I fought fiercely at all school meetings in favor of general rules which would leave the children and their parents to work things out the way it suited them best. It was an almost fruitless battle. The teachers had to obey every letter of a government decree.

Members of the Parents' Council visited classes and later reported to the parents. When I sat in a class I felt more than anywhere else what the revolution had done to Russia. I thought of my own school days and recalled the divisions between poor and rich, between educated and uneducated, between nationalities and creeds. These Soviet children knew none of these. They were all equal. They would have been unable to understand why, if one father had a bigger job than another or if a mother sang well, this should make any difference in the status of their children. The children of Bolshevik leaders, famous writers, scientists, actors, commissars were not treated differently in schools and had no greater opportunities for education than the children of unskilled laborers or peasants. At the parents' meetings the opinions of the latter carried no less weight. This part of school life made me happy. But the spiritual regimentation dismrbd me.

In the winter of 1933-1934 I once sat in Vitya's class while the teacher discussed the old and the new Russian village. A ten-year-old girl showed an excellent understanding of the advantages of the new collective farm over the old individualistic peasant farm. Yet none of her answers satisfied the teacher. She made the child change her answers so that at the end they showed no trace of a bright childish mind but sounded like a Pravda editorial. When I talked to the teacher, whom I knew as an intelligent person, she tried to justify her attitude but finally admitted the truth. She showed me a list of

answers, issued by the Commissariat of Education, which were to be accepted. It was the teacher's duty to insist that the children answer in the official language.

About this time we of the German school Parents' Council once discussed what the children should read at home. Many of us were happy over the end of the strict prohibition of all adventure and fantasy in children's books. So we were quite put out when the Komsomol representative told us of a new ban on the adventure books of Karl May, the idol of several generations of German boys. Unfortunately, Hitler liked May's books, and the Soviet government therefore prohibited them to Soviet children. Some parents protested. But the order was there and the council had to pass a resolution approving it. At home, however, we had May's book and I never took them away from our boys. I only told them to hide them, not to lend them out and not to tell anybody that they were permitted to read them. I hated all his secrecy.

At the end of the meeting, one of the fathers, a German Communist, who had dutifully supported the party spokesman, called me aside and said with some embarrassment:

"Didn't you say that you had Karl May's books at home?"

"Yes."

"You know, I used to love them when I was a boy. I think I would enjoy looking at them again. Could you lend me a couple of volumes?"

"With pleasure. I will send them with Vitya tomorrow and he will give them to your boy."

"Oh, no, no, no, don't do that," he whispered, looking around. "My boy mustn't know about it. He mustn't read these books, as you just heard. If you permit, I will come some evening and get them."

For many years, polite manners were considered an outworn bourgeois tradition in the Soviet Union. Parents who wanted their children to be polite were called old-fashioned if not anti-proletarian. But when the era of joyous, prosperous life was officially inaugurated, good manners were legalized. School children were ordered to rise when a teacher entered the class. They were punished if they did not greet the principal. It was an empty formality and did not develop any positive human qualities. One of Yura's teachers told me how impressed she was when he picked up something she dropped or pulled up a chair for her. She wanted to know how I achieved it. I assured her that I did nothing about it now but that since my boys had been small "please" and "thank you" were as familiar to them as air. I told her that when Louis once heard Yura saying to Niura: "Give me some water," he told Niura:

"Whenever the boys ask you to do anything without saying 'please,' just ignore it."

Our boys gave up their seats in a crowded bus or subway. They helped old people or invalids to cross a slippery street. It was this kind of politeness which I wanted the teachers to teach the children. The teachers wanted it as much as I did but the order had only mentioned that the children should rise in class and greet their teachers and principals.

Fortunately, a few stories soon appeared in the press about kindness to human beings in general, and to aged people in particular. Everybody knew that such items could not have appeared without a blessing from the higher-ups. As if by the wave of a magic wand, discarded human feelings were now revived. Communists were thrown out of the party for not taking care of old parents. Others were brought to court for similar crimes. "Kindness," "politeness," "generosity," "humanitarian," and similar long-forgotten words suddenly invaded Soviet phraseology. At about this time, Stalin visited his mother in Tiflis, Georgia. The Soviet papers never gave publicity to the personal affairs of Soviet leaders; but Stalin's visit to his mother was "played up" and heralded as a shining example of his extraordinary kindheartedness. Thereafter, teachers could tell school children to be polite to old people.

Simultaneously, shined shoes, neatly combed hair, and clean clothes were demanded of school children. Until then the pioneer organizations, teachers, and parents had tried hard to impress upon the children the necessity of being clean and orderly. But it was only after the government authorities issued orders that it became general almost overnight. In schools, one could observe how powerful a government decree was. A few typed lines with the necessary signatures brought results in a few hours for which parents and teachers had striven in vain for years.

The Parents' Council met regularly either alone or with all the parents. We gave reports on what was going on in school. Some parents were so busy at their jobs and political activities in the evenings that they seldom saw their children and were unable to follow closely their development. We made it a special point to watch these children and give their parents detailed reports. It brought the parents a feeling of relief to know that their children had friendly assistance.

One of our fathers was a well-known chemist. He was twenty when the revolution started in 1917. From the age of fifteen he had worked as an errand boy for a chemical laboratory and become interested in chemistry. But for the revolution, he could not have become a chemist. Now he had an excellent job, was respected in the scientific world, and had a great future. His greatest joy was his daughter. She too was interested in chemistry and they spent hours together dreaming of the day when, after graduating from the university, she would be his assistant. There was no doubt in their minds that nothing would stand in the way of this plan.

Another father was an astronomer who was disappointed when his daughter was born. He too had wanted his child to follow in his steps and it never occurred to him that a girl might become an astronomer. But his daughter was not only interested in astronomy. She showed great aptitude for it. She had organized a group in her class which, under her father's guidance, did real scientific work. Helping school groups in their extracurricular activities was usual for Soviet parents. The girl, then fourteen, had already read a paper at a Planetarium meeting. This man, the son of a former rich Moscow family, had first opposed the Bolshevik revolution. The day when he told us of his daughter's paper in the Planetarium, he exclaimed:

“There is no other country in the world where this would be possible!” He was convinced, like all Russians, that the achievements of the Soviet Union are unique.

A classmate of Yura’s was a football fan and during the football season spent all his time in the Stadium forgetting about home and school. Sports had meant little in old Russia and his mother felt heartbroken that now, when the revolution had given all children opportunities to study and to become doctors, engineers, and what not, her son was interested in “a stupid ball game.” A certain type of pre-revolutionary Russian had regarded sports as vulgar. The mother locked her boy in, took his shoes away, scolded him, but nothing helped. He would climb through the window and run away barefooted. She was deeply ashamed of having such a good-for-nothing son, and kept her troubles to herself. At school nobody could make out what was wrong with the boy. His mother had made him feel ashamed of his passion for the game and he never talked about it.

With another Parents’ Council member, I visited the mother. In the beginning she refused to talk. But when she realized that we were only trying to help her and the boy, she confessed the great shame of her life. Fortunately, the man who accompanied me on the visit was a sport fiend. He told her of football players of international fame and predicted a great future for the boy if she let him devote himself openly to his favorite pastime. We sent her a book containing biographies of famous sportsmen. Three years later the boy was on a popular junior Soviet football team, his name was mentioned in the press and his mother was proud of him.

A boy in Yura’s class loved reading. His father, ignorant and a drunkard, more than once tore up his school or library books, and beat the boy when he spent a few kopeks on a magazine or read late at night. We tried to speak to the man. Twice he threw us out. Finally, during a sober moment, we succeeded in making it clear to him that it was only through his wife’s and son’s kindness that he was not in jail for beating them during his drunkenness. We said that we would insist that they brought a complaint against him. When he got drunk again, he slept it out in a ditch before returning home. We never heard any more complaints about him.

Of course, neither the school nor the Parents’ Council could solve all the children’s problems, but we tried hard. This was made easier by the attitude of Russians to personal problems. Rarely were we told that it was none of our business. As a rule, we were received in friendly fashion, treated to a cup of tea, and given answers to all our questions. Russians do not object to people coming into their home and giving them friendly advice on their private affairs.

The activities of our Parents’ Council were manifold. But I never dreamt that we would have to light Christmas trees in Soviet schools. The Christmas tree had been frowned upon after the revolution. But in 1929, when everything connected with bourgeois life had to disappear, the Christmas tree became a leading taboo and took its place among Trotskyism, capitalism, religion, fascism, etc.

One snowy day late in December, 1935, a letter signed by Postyshev, the popular Soviet leader in the Ukraine, appeared in the Soviet press. In it he wondered why Soviet

children were deprived of one of the greatest joys of bourgeois children, the Christmas tree. Fortunately for Postyshev and the Soviet government, the Russian word for it is *yolka*, a fir tree, so that the “objectionable” word “Christmas” could be avoided. Of course, Postyshev said, Soviet children would not dream of celebrating Christmas, but why not celebrate the New Year and have a New Year’s tree, he suggested. Knowing how things work in the Soviet Union, we knew immediately that the Christmas tree under a new name had been sanctioned by the Kremlin.

That same day the Moscow evening paper outdid itself in its zeal to jump on the band wagon. Its editorial bitterly accused the market managers for neglecting the interests of Soviet children and not providing New Year’s trees for the children who loved them so. The editor was indignant. Imagine! He had made a tour of all Moscow and had not found a single fir tree on sale!

If Postyshev’s letter had not appeared in the morning, and if the eager editor had found one single tree, he would just as violently have denounced the market managers for counter-revolutionary activity in selling Christmas trees.

The very next morning the markets were full of trees. All night long, axes had been busy in the suburban forests of Moscow and at dawn the roads leading to Moscow saw a procession of peasant carts laden with trees. Early in the morning our boys rushed out and bought a tree. A year or two earlier I had shocked them by saying that I was sorry there were no Christmas trees in the Soviet Union. Now that it was officially permitted, they were happy to have one.

But what about ornaments? At street corners old women were selling old-fashioned Christmas toys hidden for years, mostly little angels. They did good business. I went to the famous handicraft store near the German embassy in search of decorations. On my way I met an old friend, the wife of a Soviet diplomat in Berlin. She was fuming with rage. She said that we had all gone mad about Christmas trees but that she was going to keep her head. For years she had had to tell Germans why there was never a Christmas tree in the Soviet embassy in Berlin. And suddenly, at someone’s hint, not even an order, she had to scrap her former official arguments and justify the somersault. “Oh, no, not I!” she exclaimed. But next thing I heard, she was personally decorating the New Year’s tree at the New Year’s party in the Soviet Foreign Office. In 1935 some people still used their brains and even expressed their opinions to a friend. But no one refused an official request.

Two or three days after Postyshev’s letter, school principals and club managers were censured if they had not yet set up a New Year’s tree. Moscovites spent days preparing decorations. Atheists sneaked into churches to buy candles. Clumsy, unaccustomed hands cut, pasted, and painted paper and wooden toys. On our tree we attached chalk pencils to make them look like candles and hid cotton-covered electric bulbs between the branches. We used every bit of tin foil and Vitya resorted to chemical tricks to make iridescent figures out of wire. Yura emptied walnuts and put funny little notes into them. We spent quite a lot of time and effort decorating our modest tree at home. But the huge one at school gave us a real headache. The responsibility for the

school New Year's trees was on the Komsomol and Pioneer organizations. In previous years, around this time, they had delivered lectures to school children explaining why Christmas should not be celebrated and how the Christmas tree represented a spirit alien to the Soviet people. Many of them had never seen a decorated Christmas tree except in old pictures. They gladly accepted the help of the more experienced members of the Parents' Councils.

A year later the situation had changed completely. As early as August there were exhibits of extremely attractive Christmas decorations, which became a new Soviet industry. Pioneer and Komsomol magazines offered suggestions for home-made decorations. In the middle of December, the big square in front of the United States embassy was transformed into a New Year's bazaar with enormous decorated trees, entertainment, book stands, sweets, food, toys, and Christmas decorations. People sang and danced there in the evenings. Russians adapt themselves quickly. In one year the "New Year's tree" became a fixture of Soviet life and it was hard to imagine that just over a year ago it had been as illegal as Trotsky's books. A few foreign Communists murmured against it for another year or two, but no one listened.

Chapter 15

The year 1936, the high point of Soviet economic progress and high spirits, made it bow to the tune of banging gaiety and merry New Year's parties. That winter, party followed party. Not only birthdays and anniversaries, but a salary raise, a return from a vacation, and even a new winter coat was made an occasion for a party. I gave one special party.

Louis was born on leap year. We decided to celebrate on February 29, 1936. For two weeks Louis and I devoted most of our time to planning and preparing the party. The first problem was: whom to invite. Friends of the family? Interesting people? "Must" people? We didn't want to crowd the apartment. We compromised by inviting a few of each group: forty-five people in all.

The next problem was how, with the least bother to the hosts, who wanted to enjoy themselves, we could mix forty-five persons speaking different languages, most of whom did not know one another. We wrote out a list of names of all the guests stating their language, profession, family status, hobbies, and dislikes. This list was to be prominently displayed in our living room. It kept us busy for several days. It had to be funny without stepping on toes. Each name was numbered. A card with the corresponding number and an illustration suggesting the person was to be panned on each guest as he or she arrived. For days we rummaged through old American magazines and cut out whiskey and perfume bottles, bathing beauties, horses, violins, books, etc. to be pasted on the cards. For Constantine Oumansky, now Soviet ambassador in Mexico, for instance, we chose a telephone. He had several on his desk in the Foreign Office press department, and he loved to speak on at least two of them at once. He was going in a few days to his new post as counselor in the Soviet embassy in Washington and for his benefit we pasted on the wall a large ad we found in a magazine. The ad read, "Young Men Go to Washington." We found several other suitable ads and pasted them all over the place. "I Spent a Fortune on My Face" fitted one of our lady visitors well. "All Women Love Me" made several of the men smile self-consciously.

Pearl Binder, the gifted British cartoonist, decorated the apartment with clever caricatures of Louis. They were her birthday present. Our boys, dressed in flaming red shirts and overalls, received each guest with a loud blowing of horns, then pinned the numbered card on them and explained the guest list on the wall. They also accepted Louis's prints, most of which were toys: It was his ninth birthday. From stores stuffed with excellent foods and drinks I had prepared a plentiful buffet. The party was a hilarious success.

By 5 A.M. I was ready for a rest. Guests began to leave. But just then Erwin Piscator, the German theater producer, now director of the Theatre Workshop of the New School for Social Research in New York, and Alexander Dovzhenko, the talented Soviet movie producer, who had met for the first time that evening, got into a highly involved discussion on modern art. Dovzhenko spoke no German, Piscator knew little Russian, and I had to act as interpreter of an academic conversation after nearly twenty-four hours on my feet and a fair number of drinks.

I still have the guest list of that evening. Some of them, Spencer and Caroline Williams, Erwin Piscator, Leo Lanya, Sylvia Chen, Sam Rodman, and a few others are in the United States. Several were executed in the great Soviet purge. To me this party now seems the quintessence of that period. Moscow was lighthearted and eager to enjoy life. But Moscow was also on the eve of dreadful and bloody events. . . . Luxuries and purges.

Women started to wear evening gowns. Men's tuxedos were sold by Mostorg, Moscow's largest department store. A phone call brought a taxi to one's door. The government gave autos as prizes for outstanding physical and mental achievements. At the same time, it was still hard to get a saucepan, a pot, or a pail, and I used to stand for at least half a day in line to get a package of photographic paper.

But there was more serious cause for complaint. The government's control over spirit and mind constantly grew tighter. Many executions and arrests had occurred in 1935 as a result of the assassination in December, 1934, of Stalin's close friend, the very popular Soviet leader, Sergei Kirov. The dark spots, however, still seemed small compared with the light which pervaded life. So when Louis, returning from New York to Moscow, stopped for a couple of weeks in Paris in May, 1936, and asked me to join him there, I was reluctant to leave Moscow. He phoned me from Paris several times and finally it

C 134] was decided that I would stay home. When I joyfully told this to some Soviet friends they thought I was queer to turn down a trip abroad. My only reason was that life in Moscow was full of pleasant excitement and I did not want to miss even two weeks of it.

Among other things, the new Soviet Constitution was in the making. When the draft was first broadcast throughout the Soviet Union in 1936, many Soviet citizens wept. It was a most magnificent compensation for all their past suffering. The Constitution pledged freedom and happiness to all. The draft was given to the country for discussion and the population indulged in an orgy of debates.

Interesting and important as this discussion was, another absorbed my interest. For some time there had been rumors about a change in the abortion law. There were too many abortions, and physicians found that women's health suffered from them. I once saw a woman who had had twenty abortions. She was dry as a stick and yellow as a lemon. But she had the legal right to have all the abortions she wanted. Men felt little responsibility toward women because there was always the possibility of an abortion. We all hoped for a change toward the better, and expected this change in one field only:

a gigantic campaign, the kind of thing the Soviet government had so well mastered, to teach people that abortion was a poor form of birth control. This could have been accompanied by an increase in the output of the contraceptives industry.

But when the Soviet government published the draft of the new anti-abortion law, it disappointed me and everybody I knew. It flatly prohibited abortions, except in cases of severe illness. It did not mention birth control at all. People were stunned. But the draft was open for discussion; people were asked to express their opinion, and since it was clear that the country was opposed, we were sure it would not be enacted. The population took energetic part in the discussion. I clipped thousands of letters published in the Soviet newspapers. They were mostly from women, but men wrote too. I sorted them according to whether they favored the prohibition of abortions or opposed it.

The pros made a thin folder. They usually consisted of outbursts of praise for the Soviet government's benefactions. Often they were signed by officials. There were letters from recipients of government orders and medals. One letter was sent by a peasant mother of twelve children who was expecting her thirteenth. Yet daily and nightly, she wrote, she was thinking in lyrical terms of "little father Stalin's bounty."

The opponents of the new abortion law, on the contrary, were so strikingly sincere, so full of genuine human feelings, that it almost looked to me as if the Soviet press was trying to influence public opinion against the official draft of the law.

I objected with my whole being to the proposed draft but I was eager to know the truth and Louis wanted to write about it. So I toured the editorial offices of the Soviet newspapers and saw with my own eyes the difficult task of the editors who were trying to be impartial and wanted to print an equal number of letters on each side. They soon had to give it up. They printed every letter supporting the new law. But sometimes for whole days their mail brought not a single letter for the draft. Editors' desks, however, were heaped high with hundreds of letters criticizing the draft of the new law.

Scientists, famous ballerinas, college girls, factory -workers, housewives, illiterate peasant mothers who dictated their letters to school children, women from the Siberian taiga and the far northern lumber camps, from Turkestan and the Volga, ail intimately and openly poured out their hearts. Whether poetic epistles -with quotations from poems and the Bible, naive biographies, or scientific dissertations, angry or pleading, they all had the same burden:

"We want to have children, and -will have them, but we do not want to be converted into child-bearing machines. We want the right to have as many or as few children as we please. Give us more housing space and build more nurseries, and you will not have to resort to drastic measures to raise the population. Let us not give up the distinction of being the only country in the world which gave women the legal right to abortion."

It was amazing how few letters mentioned birth control as an alternative to the danger of abortions. The propaganda for birth control so efficiently led in the first years after the revolution had almost died during the last years and the results were appalling.

With deep interest, the whole country watched this war of letters, which raged for weeks. For the first time the Soviet public was asked to voice its opinion in the press on a vital problem and it made clear its violent objection to the proposed law. Much zest and passion was added to the abortion-law discussion because it came at the time of the new Constitution and it therefore seemed to be the beginning of a new era fulfilling Lenin's promise that the country would be governed by the people.

We spent the evening of June 27, 1936, in the house of an American friend. He had just received an electric refrigerator from America. It stood in the hall, and aroused the endless admiration of the whole house. Several American visitors, among them Kenneth Durant and Genevieve Taggard, were there. Louis phoned the Press Department for news. I could see by his face that he was listening to bad news. "The abortion law is adopted without changes," he said. If I had been slapped in the face right in front of all the people there, I would have felt less humiliated. Someone with dirty boots had trampled over and soiled all the exalted feelings and hopes of these weeks.

In about a week I had to make a hurried trip to the Crimea where Yura, desperately ill with dysentery, was taken from his summer camp to a Yalta hospital. During the forty-eight-hour trip, despite my mortal worry about Yura, my fellow passengers engaged me in a never-ending discussion of the new law. People openly expressed their indignation. The first thing I heard in the Intourist hotel in Yalta after the news that Yura was out of danger was that the city had already had several cases of self-poisoning. "If a woman does not want to have a child, she is not going to have it," said an Intourist interpreter. "It only means that instead of proper medical attention, she will turn to a quack or to the time-honored knitting needle or a deadly acid." These words were prophetic.

In the beginning physicians, some from human motives, others from more materialistic ones, were quite lenient about performing abortions. Arrests, high fines, and withdrawal of the license to medical practice soon stopped that. It became almost impossible to get an abortion even in the case of a serious illness. Only those who had unsuccessfully tried to help themselves with crude means and were brought to hospitals in danger of bleeding to death could get medical help. A couple of blocks from our house was a Red Cross clinic which for years had a sign on one of its entrances reading: "Patients with commenced abortions." When the new law was introduced, this sign caused traffic jams. Ambulances, taxis, moaning bundles huddling in the arms of men, waited their turn for hours. The place was soon closed. Doctors refused to abort even when they knew that this refusal would be fatal to the woman, for they also knew that an operation might be fatal to their career. They realized how cruel their refusals were. But fear for one's skin is a compelling motive. Few people blamed the doctors.

During the week, in this summer of 1936, that I spent in Yalta with my sick son, I visited his camp, the famous Artek. The children received me with great hospitality. They played games, they danced and sang for me. A fiery-eyed Georgian boy with a slim agile body went through a demonstration of perfect horsemanship. I met and shook hands with the celebrities of the camp: the boy who had saved human lives by

courageously averting a railway accident; the two boys who caught a spy as he was about to cross the frontier; the little Turkestan girl who received a medal from Stalin's hand and had her picture taken with him; the famous Klabardinian boy who received the Order of Lenin as the best horse breeder in his region. Children of many colors and races, from the Polar region to the Asiatic plains, from the metropolis of Moscow to a lonely village in the Caucasian mountains, winsome, healthy, carefree children, led a bu^h happy life on the picturesque shores of the Black Sra which, before 1917, were the exclusive playgrounds of Russia's upper class. The teachers, all of them young, athletic, and enthusiastic, as well as the director showed a devotion to and pride in their work which was unusual even in the Soviet llion.

I spent hours every day in Yura's hospital room, which he shared with two peasant boys also taken ill at the Artek camp. In my childhood there was a deep gulf between a peasant youngster and myself, but there was hardly any difference between these boys and Yura. It seemed to me they knew more than he did. They had the same school learning and had read the same books, but besides they knew and understood farming. They were full of ideas of what they would do some day to improve their collective farms. They dreamt of mechanizing the entire village. They used the same literary Russian language Yura spoke. They had a much better handwriting. Their thinking was somewhat slower but deeper. They were polite and clean. They were just ordinary peasant boys like millions of others, and every year new millions like them were graduated from schools and entered life as educated human beings instead of the ignorant downtrodden peasants of less than twenty years earlier.

This always happened to me in the Soviet llion. Something like the anti-abortion law would arouse all my indignation and opposition; I would be miserable and skeptical. Then two small peasant boys would cross my path and give me an object lesson which moderated my disapproval.

Against my desire, I had to go abroad that summer. Vitya was suffering from joint rheumatism and doctors prescribed sulphur baths. Had he been the son of a Soviet worker, he would have been admitted freely to a children's sanatorium. As it was, I took him to a mountain resort in Czechoslovakia, After the stimulating life in Moscow and the buoyant Soviet resorts, Trentschin Teplitz, despite its many entertainments, seemed lifeless. I had quite a task explaining to Vitya some of the "peculiarities" of the capitalist world. Why was there such a difference between rich and poor? He knew in Moscow, too, people who earned more money than others and who lived and dressed better but he never knew that it made any difference in the relationship between people. Why this distinction between Czechs, Germans, Jews, Slovaks, Hungarians, Poles? Why always mention the nationality when talking of a person? In Moscow he never knew who was a Russian, Tartar, Jew, or Armenian.

Chapter 16

One morning, August 15, 1936, thunder struck from a clear sky. Headlines read: Zinoviev and Kamenev on Trial for Treason. Zinoviev and Kamenev, two of the most prominent Soviet leaders only a few years ago, to be shot! Only much later did I realize that that morning strolling with Vitya through the beautiful old park in Slovakia marked our last peaceful hour for many years to come. My serenity and faith in the future were gone. I must have suspected that this was the beginning of a vast and fatal purge which would shake all of Soviet life.

For the solace of my soul I tried to justify the Zinoviev-Kamenev trial and the death sentences. The Soviet government accused the defendants of plotting against it and the party leaders. Like most Russians, since 1927 I had been inclined to believe that any opposition to the Soviet government was treason. But everything in me rebelled against the execution of men who had helped to make the revolution and who had been intimate friends of Lenin. I was at a complete loss to understand the eager competition of the accused to blacken themselves and their past. j ' |

I expected Louis during those days. After the end of a trip through the Soviet Union he planned to spend a few weeks with us in Czechoslovakia. I hoped that he would help me understand the trial. He arrived deeply disturbed by events in Spain and intended immediately to fly to Madrid. The trial? He had left Moscow before the trial and in the provinces and villages hardly anyone even mentioned it. Russians were totally absorbed in the feverish activities connected with a bumper crop and a rapidly rising production. They were little touched by the trial. A few weeks later in Moscow I heard almost the identical words from Maurice Hindus, who had just returned from a prolonged trip through Russia.

Louis flew to Madrid. Vitya and I stayed a few days in Prague, the beautiful city which we knew and loved from a previous visit. I avoided people. Theretofore we had been met with a friendly curiosity. After the trial I was often embarrassed by unpleasant comments. Once we walked into a small dry-goods store. The storekeeper, a kindly old man, asked the usual question: "Where do you come from?" Only a couple of weeks ago I had been proud to say, "Moscow," and to answer questions. The old man's face lost its gentleness at my answer. Olberg (one of the men sentenced to death at the Zinoviev-Kamenev trial) had lived in Prague in this same house and often visited the store.

"He used to sit," said the old man and his voice shook, "right here, where you sit, on that same chair, and talk about socialism and how happy everyone would be. I have lived a long life, and I know a criminal when I see him. You can tell the people in

Moscow that this young man was no criminal. Whatever he did, it was for the good of mankind.”

Niura, smiling widely, and our faithful friend Adele met us at the station in Moscow. Adele gave me the shock of my life by addressing me in a horrible Hungarian-German accented Russian. We had never spoken anything but German before. I laughed at her Russian and greeted her joyfully in German.

“I implore you,” she said with a frantic look around, “for your sake, for your children’s sake, don’t speak German in public.”

In the car she broke out in tears.

“Everything is so changed since you left. Germans were involved in the trial, and now they are being arrested right and left. They are thrown out of jobs and apartments. Every one of us is suspected of being a Gestapo spy. Even Schutzbuendler [the heroes of the Vienna revolt of 1934] are in prison.”

I did not believe a word Adele said. I thought the news that her husband had been sent to a Nazi concentration camp in Germany had made her hysterical and she was seeing ghosts. A dark-haired and dark-eyed girl, with an easy laugh and dimpled cheeks, fond of music and dancing, Adele was a German of Hungarian origin, a disciplined German Communist. She had come to Russia, the country of her dreams, in 1931. Like all German and other foreign Communists in Moscow, she bore bravely all the discomforts of inadequate housing and the lack of a thousand and one things which a non-Russian endures much less easily than a Russian does. Few foreign Communists had political jobs in Moscow. The others were given small jobs which they devotedly and loyally carried out while deeply missing the political activities in their former home. Adele, like most other German Communists, had a small office job and was ready to go back to Germany and to the dangers of underground work the moment the Soviet authorities would let her. She was one of the many foreign Communists whose fighting spirit was gradually broken by submission and inactivity in the Soviet Union.

After a few days in Moscow I no longer thought that Adele saw ghosts. A severe purge was on. But it affected chiefly the narrow circles of active Soviet and foreign Communists. Within these groups life had turned to tragedy. But the population in general, my Soviet friends, the hundreds of people in our house, went unconcernedly their usual ways. One did not hear a great deal of talk about the purge in those fall days in 1936. Life was still filled with activity and hope.

The outstanding event was the Spanish Civil War in which Russians showed a deep emotional concern. There was hardly a home without a map of Spain; thousands of people studied Spanish; thousands offered their homes to Spanish children; scientists as well as peasants called their babies Dolores and Juan. When members of Spanish delegations walked in the streets of Moscow, admiring crowds followed them. People showered them with gifts and vied for the honor of inviting them to their homes. Louis used to send me leaflets from Spain and they were considered among our Russian friends, especially the youth, as precious gifts. A public exhibit on the Spanish War became a place of pilgrimage. Dead tired after a hard day’s work, people waited for

the latest midnight broadcast on Spain. When Spanish children arrived in the Soviet Union, they had to be protected from too much love, A Spanish speaker assured the success of any gathering. Without understanding him, Russians, their eyes filled with love, would hang upon his words.

I studied Spanish and as soon as I was able to translate it into Russian, I translate articles from the Spanish press for civilian defense groups. These groups were founded in the early thirties when the Soviet government started to prepare the Soviet population for a possible future war. Factories, schools, clubs, and apartment houses introduced courses in first aid, protection against air raids and poison gas, as well as in elementary military drill, topography, and sharpshooting. With the beginning of the Spanish Civil War in the summer of 1936, the number of these courses greatly increased. The lessons of Madrid and Barcelona were studied not only by the German military but also by Soviet housewives. The way Spaniards cared for their wounded and children, the way they met their food shortage and other civilian problems were discussed in Moscow Red Cross groups.

Our house had one of the best-organized groups in the neighborhood. Like all houses in Moscow where there are no rich and poor neighborhoods or sections preferred by racial or professional groups, our house represented a cross section of the city's population. Doctors and actors, engineers and scientists, factory workers and high government officials, teachers and minor office clerks lived there. Their wives, if they held no jobs, as well as the charwomen, women janitors, and elevator attendants, attended the civilian defense classes organized by the Red Cross. The educational grades of those attending the classes ranged from college graduates to illiterates. The latter were taken care of by the more educated ones. I helped the house plumber's wife, Marisha, who came to Moscow from a small Mordovian village on the Volga.

Our groups were divided into stretcher-bearing units which, with other units of our house and other houses in our block, merged into the larger units of the neighborhood to form a Red Cross Civilian Defense Corps. We took part in numerous activities. When, with the first signs of spring, the waters of the Moscow River threatened to overflow and flood densely populated sections of the city, we were on duty day and night at the most dangerous posts. When the Park of Culture and Rest staged its children or adult festivals, we were on hand to assist physicians and nurses. At football games and tennis matches, at swimming and ice-skating contests, wherever there was a crowd, we were called upon to help. In large apartment houses like ours, we had medical corners where first-aiders helped in minor emergencies thus relieving overworked Soviet physicians and nurses for more important work.

We had complete charts of each apartment. They showed the number of occupants, their age and profession, their hours of work and school, who took care of invalids and babies, who was handicapped by a physical defect. This was a direct preparation for a war emergency.

Meanwhile housewives helped invalids to shop, mothers took other babies along for a walk, youngsters ran errands for those who were too busy themselves. This was all part of our civilian defense tasks.

We also made regular inspections of apartments. The main purpose was to prepare them for air raids, incendiary bombs, and instantaneous evacuation. But during these visits women also discussed the latest movies, dietary problems, a child's school marks, and family troubles. These activities introduced a close companionship into our lives. Russians are good-natured and they did not mind when the investigators—frequently a next-door neighbor—gave them advice on their private affairs or scolded them for an unsanitary garbage pail or a badly aired room.

Besides inspecting the apartments, I was given the job of leading first-aid courses for children. Like their adults, they were being mentally prepared for war as early as 1936, and they had their assigned place in the civilian defense setup. Occasionally our adult and children groups were taken for a practical demonstration to the Park of Culture and Rest. A large section of the park had been turned over to civilian defense. Booths filled with tear gas, open-air first-aid courses, instruction in the handling of machine guns, small tanks and airplanes attracted as big a crowd as the entertainment and sport sections of the park. Prizes were given to the best contestants in shooting, skiing in gas masks, parachuting, fire fighting, and quizzes on civilian defense problems. Women participated as enthusiastically as men. There were contests in which the public judged who ought to be entrusted with the highly responsible job of air-raid warden.

Occasionally an official speaker came to our unit to talk about Soviet patriotism and the importance of subordinating one's personal interests to the country's defense. These pep talks were not needed. The women were well aware of what they might have to defend some day. I was chairman of a civilian defense unit. The other members were the little Mordovian, Marisha, the plumber's wife, one of our elevator women, the wife of a school teacher, and a high-school girl who was the daughter of a movie script writer. Together we spent many hours on duty at the Moscow River banks, in the Dynamo Stadium, in the Park of Culture, and in our medical corner. As a part of our training we sat through evenings knitting and chatting with our gas masks on. We became close friends. So did the members of other units in our house as well as all over the Soviet Union. The fact that the half-illiterate Marishas and the college graduates, the Mongolians, Russians, Jews, and Armenians were equals legally and socially, in work and play and in the defense of their country, that their children went to the same schools, and that they all shared alike the hardships and joys of Soviet life made it worth while for them to prepare to fight when this life should be endangered.

In the middle of the winter of 1936-1937 one or another of the women in our groups disappeared following the arrest of a husband, father, sweetheart, or brother. She could no longer put her mind on dressing wounds or running around in a gas mask. Or it might have been hinted to her by the Red Cross higher-ups that she had no place among loyal citizens training to defend their country. We worked in close co-operation with the Red Army officers' apartment house on our block. In 1937, during the great

Red Army purge, when the leading generals were executed, many of the officers living there were shot or exiled, and their wives disappeared too. Others took their place, some of them soon to disappear, too. Nobody ever said a word about this, but red eyes and a choked voice often betrayed anxiety for friends. General Eideman, the man who had built up Ossoviakhim (Defense against Chemical Warfare), into the most powerful factor in Soviet civilian defense, was shot after a secret trial in June, 1937. Hundreds of leading members and of the rank and file of Ossoviakhim and the Red Cross were liquidated in the purge. New people took over. For a while the civilian defense activities suffered. But, on the surface at least, the breach was soon healed and the preparations to defend the country continued.

All other activities went on too. The purge did not disrupt life on the surface. When it started, in the fall of 1936, people were hardly aware of it. But by spring of 1937, though continuing to lead normal lives outwardly, larger groups of the population were gradually being disturbed by the purge. One heard of innumerable arrests and executions. Popular figures were branded as traitors. From a limited circle of Communist leaders the purge reached down into the rank and file of the Communist party and soon overtook non-Communists as well. It spread throughout the Red Army, and affected old and young officers alike. From the highest Soviet officialdom it swept down into the ranks of teachers, office workers, factory directors, engineers, physicians, actors, students, scientists, writers, even factory workers.

Daily the paper reported executions in all corners of the Soviet Union because of railroad accidents, bad food served in a factory kitchen, neglected harvesting, or espionage. Many executions were not reported in the press but we knew about them. Families, friends, neighbors, and prison guards talked. Familiar faces disappeared and others took their places in government offices, factories, universities. The new appointees were heralded as saviors after the "wrecking" committed by their predecessors. But soon many of them were in turn called wreckers and pulled.

We tried to keep up our normal routine and normal spirit as if nothing were happening, as if it would be possible to return soon to the bright hopeful atmosphere of only a few months ago. People tried to escape by listening to old operas and reading classics and history and visiting museums. But as hard as we tried, it soon became impossible to think about anything else but executions, arrests, and exiles. Our boys would bring home stories about the purged parents of their schoolmates. A neighbor would drop in. Niura would rush in with the latest news. And it was always the same desperate thing:

"Did you hear that so-and-so was shot, exiled, arrested, committed suicide?"

Every conversation started with the same whispered questions. A remark made by Niura stands out in my mind as a terrible experience among many terrible experiences in those days. She called me to the window and, pointing to a middle-aged man in the street, calmly said:

"Look, there goes X. He is an old Bolshevik but he is not arrested yet."

"But why should an old Bolshevik be arrested?" I asked.

“Why, don’t you know? Every one of them is a traitor. They want to kill Stalin and bring back the landowners.”

There was no use arguing with her against the official Soviet propaganda. Stalin had succeeded in convincing the masses that the old Bolsheviks, those who had made the revolution with him, those whom the public had been taught to worship and to look up to, had gradually, for different reasons—^jealousy of Stalin, desire for power, loss of “revolutionary vigilance” (the favorite slogan of 1937), and what not—^turned against the revolution and its prophet, Stalin. Niura truly represented the mentality of the woman and man in the street. She was, like most Russians, warmhearted and responsive to human troubles. She felt sorry for purge victims and helped them in secret if she could. But she was not bothered by political doubts and accepted every official utterance as gospel.

She was very devoted to our family and greatly respected us. But had I ever expressed anything in her presence which was contrary to the official propaganda, she might innocently have mentioned it to someone, and I would have had to pay a high price for my frankness.

Chapter 17

Beginning in September, 1936, Louis completely shifted his professional activity from the Soviet Union to Spain and came home only on occasional visits. My old job of helping him -while he was in Moscow and supplying him with printed material while he was away thus ended. I worked on translations at home and kept busy with my Red Cross work and activities in the boys' schools. The evenings were spent quietly at home. The hectic evenings of the pre-purge years were gone. Our "open house" was closed. No more gay parties. The wide circle of Soviet friends was narrowed to a few intimates. No more American tourists or British M. P.'s. Few of them came now to the Soviet Union and I did not feel like entertaining them. I had greatly enjoyed it in the past when I proudly showed them around. There was not much pride in me now. The purge was too close to my doorstep.

Our next-door neighbor, Natasha, a tall, dark, grayeyed woman in her middle thirties, was a close friend of the family. Her husband, Grigori Belenki, a friend of Lenin and hero of the 1917 revolution, had an important job in the Commissariat for Heavy Industry, and spent many of his evenings at work or in conferences and meetings. Natasha would sit with us.

In his younger years, Grigori had been a popular speaker among workers. At a meeting fifteen years before, in a textile factory, he had met Natasha, then a young factory worker who had just come to Moscow from her village. They fell in love and married. The highly intellectual Jew and the Russian peasant girl were a devoted couple. With his help and by attending adult evening schools, she educated herself. Grigori, active politically until 1929, was excluded from all such activities in that year because he did not approve of Stalin's "crude and expensive" methods of industrialization and collectivization. He was given only administrative industrial jobs. The purge wounded his heart. So many of his old comrades were being shot. Was his turn coming soon? Would he, who had done nothing against the government and much for it, be purged because he was a friend of men who had been purged? He looked thinner and paler every day. So did Natasha. His office superior was arrested. His secretary committed suicide. His life became an agony of waiting. He was always a quiet man, shunning people, devoted to his work and living partly in his glorious past. Now he became still quieter, did not want to see anyone, and spent his free time reading and brooding in his study among the many cherished mementoes of the past. The most precious of all were personal letters to him from Lenin and a photo of Lenin and him together with a witty inscription by Lenin. He possessed many large albums with eloquent tributes followed by hundreds of signatures given to him by workers years ago. He also had

a baby picture of Lenin in a beautifully worked metal frame with an affectionate inscription from a group of metal workers. He used to show these mementoes to us.

From the day we moved into the house we maintained good-neighborly friendship. We borrowed books, household articles, food, and chairs from one another. We guarded each other's apartments, plants, and cats during vacations. We shared all our good and bad experiences. Now Grigori feared this close association of his wife with a foreigner's family. He permitted Natasha to drop in for a newspaper or some such necessity, but our cosy evenings of tea drinking, gossip, and music were gone.

On a December morning in 1937 Natasha rang the bell and asked for our morning paper. Grigori suffered from diabetes. He was not well that morning and had not gone to the office where he got his newspaper. Natasha promised to bring the paper back soon. But she did not ring our bell again till late that night. All day long the GPU had been searching their apartment and now Grigori had been taken away. While he was still home, Natasha had controlled herself. She had even tried to keep him in good humor. But now it was over. The anguish of that day and of the many months of waiting exploded.

"What shall I live for now? I will never see Grigori alive again. He is not young and he is a very sick man. They know it. They know he can't live if he hasn't got his diet and his medicines. I begged them to permit him to take his pills along. They refused. And I begged them on my knees not to take Lenin's letters and picture away. You know what they said? 'A traitor's house is not the place for it!' Well, if Grigori can be called a traitor of the Soviet Union, then life is worthless for me!"

For several days Niura and I watched her. We hoped that if she got over the first shock, she would come to herself. That is what happened. The routine of life demanded action of her. She had joined the army of tens of thousands of fathers, mothers, husbands, wives, children, brothers, and sisters who in a vain effort to locate their loved ones after an arrest stood for hours and days at the GPU information windows, and at entrances of prisons. Natasha, like the others, traveled from one end of Moscow to another to learn, after hours of waiting on her feet in stuffy rooms or in the bitter cold outside: "He is not in this prison," "We have no record of him," "We have no information about him."

She used to come back, her heart bleeding with her own sorrow and with the sorrow of thousands of others whom she saw daily at the same windows asking the same questions, getting the same heartless replies. She sold her victrola, which Grigori had received a year ago as a prize for good work at his government job. She had to live, they had no savings; besides books the victrola was the only valuable thing they possessed.

Six weeks after Grigori's arrest, a GPU agent came and told Natasha to prepare some clothing and underwear for her husband for the next day at a certain hour. The agent would not answer any of her eager questions about Grigori's whereabouts and health. At the appointed hour the following day a big GPU truck stopped in front of the house. Three or four uniformed men jumped out and started to run back and forth into the nine entrances of our house carrying bundles and throwing them into

the truck. We knew that many people had been arrested in our house but had never realized that the number was so great. The truck moved half a block and stopped in front of another large apartment house. From our windows we could see the repetition of the same procedure.

Natasha went back to work in her old textile factory. She could only get a poorly paid unskilled job. But she was well pleased. Most women whose husbands were in jail could not get even that because nobody dared to give them work. Besides keeping her alive, the job kept her occupied. She would not have been able to face life alone all day long in the apartment where everything reminded her of Grigori.

About four months after Grigori's arrest, Natasha received a letter from the GPll asking her to come on the next day "for the clarification of some questions." Only the week before the wife of an arrested engineer who also lived on our floor had received an identical letter. She went and never came back. Recently we had often heard of similar cases, and Natasha had no reason to interpret her letter in any other way. We spent that day together. She gave our older son Yura many of Grigori's books which he had long admired, some of them with autographs of famous writers and Soviet leaders. She gave Niura a few little gifts and asked us to keep her bedding, some of her furniture, dishes, etc. Late at night, like conspirators, we carried all this to our apartment. None of us slept that night. The next morning we helped Natasha prepare. We had heard of Soviet women spending months in prison without being able to change or wash their clothing. So Natasha put on two sets of underwear, her best street suit, two sweaters, two pairs of stockings and a warm coat, and put some toilet articles into her purse. After a heartbreaking good-bye she went away. We arranged that if things went well, she would phone me from a pay station. I did not expect her to phone.

I was delighted to hear her say over the phone about two hours later "I am on my way home." We gave her a great welcome. She was in high spirits, full of hopes. The GPll agents had been charming to her. They said that Grigori was fine, that the investigation of his case would be finished in two days, that she should come then and they hoped to be able to give her good news. All they wanted from her was some trifling information. She was certain now that either Grigori was going to be freed and come home, or if he was to be exiled, she would be permitted to go with him. That was as much as she wanted in life.

That same evening we carried all her belongings back to her apartment with the exception of the books which she had given to Yura, Lenin's baby picture, and the precious albums. Two days later without any excitement, with one set of underwear and one sweater, without toilet articles and without solemn good-byes, Natasha left the house to go to the GPll and from there to her job.

"Be sure and telephone me," I said.

She laughed at my anxiety.

"You begin to see ghosts where there aren't any," she said. "But I don't want you to worry needlessly; I will phone as soon as I can."

She did not phone. She never came back. In the late afternoon Niura heard steps in her apartment. She knocked at the door and there stood a uniformed GPll man. For a short moment Niura was speechless, but she quickly recovered. With her most winning smile she asked:

“Isn’t the little mistress home?”

The man was probably taken aback by so much stupidity.

“Don’t you see she isn’t here and what do you want anyway?”

“You see, Natasha borrowed my electric iron and I need it badly now. But it’s all right, I’ll come for it later when she will be home.”

“That’s too bad, but you can’t have your iron now or later,” and he slammed the door in Niura’s face.

Niura returned to the apartment shaking like a leaf. It took a long time and a strong sedative to calm her. The little act she put on was a great strain on her nerves. But she must have played it masterfully because when, two days later, GPll men came again with a truck, this time to empty Natasha’s apartment and to throw pell-mell into the truck all the furniture, clothing, household apparel, underwear, books, papers, any odd little thing, one of the men knocked at our door and handed Niura an electric iron. Despite the sadness of the moment, we had to laugh. The iron did not belong to us, it was Natasha’s; this was the first thing which had come to Niura’s mind when she had to explain her visit to Natasha. We regretted having returned all the other things we had borrowed.

There were special stores where truckloads full of belongings of purge victims were sold. They were not the famous Moscow commission shops so dear to the hearts of foreign and Russian antique lovers. They were located in obscure neighborhoods which few foreigners ever visited. I once walked into such a store. Disorderly piles of ill-assorted objects: genuine oriental rugs, wornout shoes, a child’s first copybook, an evening gown, a broken mirror, letters, photographs—valuable and worthless things, all that had meant a home, a happy life gone forever.

A few days after Natasha’s arrest a GPll man and his wife moved into her apartment. They might have been very fine people. I never had a chance to find out. It seemed disloyal to Natasha to make friends with them. There was no other way to express what I felt. I never talked about it to the other neighbors but they must have felt the same way. The GPll couple remained lonely.

The fate of Natasha and Grigori was a drop in the ocean of misery I saw all around us.

Among our most intimate Moscow friends was a couple, Andrei and Liza, of whom we were extremely fond. He had been a revolutionist from early youth. He had spent many years abroad, knew languages well, had a charming personality, and had made many friends in Moscow’s foreign colony. He was as devoted to his work and to the Soviet Union as anybody could be. But when one after another his personal friends and old associates disappeared, when he was expelled from the Communist party and

lost his job, he knew that his turn would soon come. Late one evening, ashen pale, he came to see me.

‘It is only a question of days now,’ he said, ‘and this is a real good-bye. When Louis comes, give him my love, and please be good to my family.’

I promised from the depth of my heart. He got up to go. Only those who have had to say good-bye forever to someone they dearly love know how heartrending such a last embrace is.

Two days later Liza came. Andrei had been taken away the night before. We had a good cry together, and then became very prosaic and practical—which usually is a great help in overcoming a heartache. We made plans for the future. Liza was an excellent translator and had a good job but she was certain that she would be discharged now, as were all wives of arrested men. She refused any financial help from me, simply because she knew she would be asked by the GPU whether she had accepted money from a foreigner’s wife and she did not want to lie. But there are many other ways of helping a person and I think I kept my promise to Andrei.

Liza’s fears were justified. A few days later, she was discharged. She could get no other work and went through hard times. The few valuables they possessed—a typewriter, a camera, a victrola—had been taken away by the GPU when Andrei was arrested. There was nothing she could sell and she had to provide for herself and her two daughters. She also had to face a serious problem with her older daughter, Valya. Valya was like her mother, dark blonde, good-looking, and very quiet. Her father was her idol. Liza’s problem with Valya was the same as many mothers had to cope with during these years, when the children had admired their fathers as loyal devoted Communists. The children either had to be told that their fathers were enemies of the revolution and of the Soviet government or that their fathers were loyal citizens—which meant that the Soviet government was wrong in arresting them. This for a Soviet child is just as heartbreaking as to discover that the adored father is a counter-revolutionary. Most of the mothers whom I knew found one way or another out of the situation without hurting the child too deeply. After long consideration Liza told Valya that her father remained the good revolutionary they always knew him to be. But through some old friends, Liza said, he might have known of the existence of an opposition to the Soviet government. It was his duty to report this. Out of understandable, decent feelings he could not bring himself to inform on friends. But “at this serious moment in Soviet history” (this phrase has often misled not only little Soviet girls) it was not proper to suppress such information.

After having been refused work for a long time, Liza went to the Soviet Control Commission where every Soviet citizen can go with a complaint against a government office. She demanded her right as a Soviet citizen to work and support her family. The head of the commission was Mariya Ilyinishna Ilyanova, Lenin’s favorite sister and a close friend of his widow, Nadezhda Krupskaya. Ilyanova had brought into the Control Commission a kind, human spirit, and people, whenever possible, received satisfaction. But Liza’s case was a “political” case. The people in the commission were friendly to

her but they made it clear that as long as she remained the wife of a man accused of being an enemy of the people, she identified herself with his ideas and therefore could not be helped. In other words she was told: Divorce your husband or starve to death. With indignation Liza rejected the idea of a divorce. How could she desert Andrei? He had always dearly loved his family, and now they were all that remained to him in this world. A letter or a snapshot from them which took at least three months to reach him by train and reindeer, and a package which reached him in his Arctic exile after seven or eight months were like a ray of sun in the far-away Polar wilderness. How could she inflict the pain of divorce on him? But after another few weeks of unsuccessful jobseeking in a city where good workers were desperately needed, Liza saw no other way out. She had to think of the children. They had become anemic and sickly. So she divorced Andrei and promised never to write to him. She immediately got a job. The family had food again though Liza often wished she had a letter from Andrei instead of a meal. But she was not supposed to communicate with him after the divorce.

There were many such tragedies among our friends and neighbors. Hardly a day passed without a new heartache and another hope shattered. I desperately fought against complete disillusion. I imagined a mental scale: On the positive side of the scale I placed whatever proof I could find that all was not lost yet. I was always more eager to fill the positive than the negative scale. I looked for people who were untouched by the purge and who had reason to be happy. I found plenty of them.

There was Pasha, a relative of Niura, a handsome woman in her fifties, who spoke a beautiful Russian folk language, rich in idiom and images. In a deep melodious voice she liked to tell stories of her childhood, of the old landlord and of his wife who had seemed like a fairy to the little peasant girl. Pasha's stories were a mixture of reality and superstition, of past and present. She grew up in fear of God, of the landlord, of rich people, of the priest, and of the czarist police. When I met her in 1936 she still lived in the world of her old fears. She had little contact with Soviet life. Communism to her was something like the Antichrist. I saw her gradually losing one fear after another until they were all gone except her fear of God which never left her. She went to a Soviet evening school and learned to read and to write. She saw her two young daughters changing from ignorant clumsy village girls into educated city girls who dressed well, talked an educated language, discussed books and plays, and received salaries which Pasha had never heard of before. Whatever was accessible to anyone in the Soviet Union was accessible to them. They lived like the rich people of Pasha's youth.

Pasha spent the summer of 1936 in her village and there she found dozens of students, aviators, Red Army commanders, a professor, a ballerina—all of whom she had known as unwashed barefooted peasant youngsters—who came to spend their vacations in their own village and help with the harvesting. This meant a great deal to her. When she returned in the fall bringing presents of jars of jam and pickles for us, she decided to cease being only a housewife, and got herself a job as a cleaning woman in a school. She took great interest in her work, attended the school meetings, and did

much more than her job demanded. She had nothing but praise for the Soviet government. Her life was full and rich as never before. If one was critical in her presence, she would say:

“Now, don’t you say anything against the Soviets. Where would I and my daughters be today if not for the revolution?”

During the purge, she would, like a good old-fashioned Russian, sigh over the misery she heard about and even cross herself and say a prayer when told of an execution, but nothing could shake her confidence in the government.

Another neighbor used to express his feelings in almost similar words. He was an old railroad worker who after a hard life’s work received an old-age pension and lived in our house with three of his five sons. Two of his sons were engineers, one was an actor, one an aviator, one an agricultural expert. Their wives were all professional women and the many grandchildren were in high schools, colleges, and factory schools getting as good an education as one could find in Russia. Even if the purge had lasted ten years longer and a hundred times as many people had been executed, it would have made no difference to this old man.

“Lenin,” he once said, “put the keys to happiness into my hands. No man can pay for such a gift. The least I can do to show my eternal gratitude is to be a good servant of the Soviet government.”

Many people were pleased with their lives and deeply grateful to the government for the opportunities it gave them. The purge had not directly touched them and they believed the newspapers which said that those whom it had engulfed wanted to destroy the gains of the revolution.

Among the victims of the purge were many high officials of the heavy and light industries, of transportation and agriculture. This disrupted the production of consumers’ goods, and 1937 brought a new period of shortage of food and commodities. But the masses accepted the government’s explanation that the shortage came because the purged men were sabotaging and wrecking Soviet industry and that as soon as the new men repaired the damage the shortage would disappear. I once asked a woman, who, like Pasha and the old railroad worker, had reason to feel that the Soviet regime gave her a lease on life:

“How is it that we had plenty of everything during the years when these men who are supposed to be traitors and saboteurs were working in industry?”

The woman walked out of the room indignantly and, as neighbors told me, she wanted to report me to the GPU. A question like mine was regarded as tantamount to taking sides with traitors. No wonder did those who did not believe every official word avoided people and conversations. Life for me grew lonelier every day.

Louis came to Moscow from Spain in late summer, 1937. The changes he found since his last visit a few months earlier shocked him. Many of his friends had disappeared, others were afraid to come to the house. He found me lonely and unhappy, and urged me to spend a couple of months with him in Paris and London later in the year. It was

the first time that I longed to get away from the Soviet Union just to breathe freely for a while. At the same time I hated to leave the boys and my remaining friends.

In order to get a passport to travel abroad I had to go several times to AOMS, the Soviet Passport and Visa Department. There I witnessed several truly dramatic incidents. For years, foreigners who came to Russia in quest of work were urged to give up their foreign citizenship and become Soviet citizens. But foreign Communists were often told to keep their foreign citizenship and to hand in their passports to the Comintern. The latter then took care of all the formalities connected in the Soviet Union with foreign passports, like registration and extension of visas, for instance. When, as part of the purge, mass arrests started among foreign Communists, this was changed. The Comintern returned the passports to many of the remaining Communists with instructions henceforth to take care of the formalities personally. This brought a great deal of hardship because many of the passports had expired long ago, and others were invalid because their owners had been deprived of their citizenship by Fascist governments.

I was present in the AOMS when the wife of the wellknown German revolutionary poet, Erich Weinert, was told to go to the German embassy to renew her German passport. Otherwise, the Soviet official told her, her permit to stay in the Soviet Union would not be renewed and she would be deported. She explained that both she and her husband had been deprived of German citizenship by the Nazis and no German embassy official would talk to her. Moreover, she said, a return to Germany meant certain death to them.

“Besides, you know that I never had anything to do with my passport. The Comintern took care of it.”

The AOMS official looked at her in blank amazement.

“The Comintern? I assure you that our department never had anything to do with this organization.”

That was a lie.

Fortunately, Erich Weinert was then with the International Brigade in Spain and had powerful friends in Moscow. This saved the wife of the future chairman of the Free Germany Committee, organized in Moscow in the summer of 1943, from being deported to Nazi Germany.

Others were less fortunate. The day I was getting my passport at the AOMS, another German Communist, also deprived of her German citizenship by the Nazis, was told to go to the German embassy to prolong her expired passport or else be deported. The woman turned white and pleaded with the official. She might as well have pleaded with a wooden statue.

An hour later I was waiting in the Germany embassy for my transit visa through Germany. This was the first time I was going through Germany after Hitler came to power and the first time I was in a Nazi embassy. I knew that nothing would happen to me, but I shivered all over. It was not fear, it was a physical horror of Hitler's pictures, of the swastikas, of the “Heil Hitler,” of the brutality I felt in the hands and eyes of the

people there and in the air itself. My rum came. The door of the consul's office opened and the woman whom I had seen in AOMS staggered out. I heard the Nazi official say in a honeycoated voice:

“Make up your mind and let us know. We will be only too glad to help you get home to the Fatherland.”

My German transit visa was ready in a few minutes. When I left the embassy, the woman was slowly walking away. Death was in her eyes. The Soviet authorities refused all assistance and threw her, the innocent victim of yesterday's party line, into the friendly arms of the German authorities who offered to send her “home,” to the Gestapo. She, a Communist, could not remain in the Soviet Union. She could go to Nazi Germany which she hated. I wanted to walk over and talk to her. I could not help her but I know how much a friendly word means when you face a precipice. At that same moment I met a pair of eyes looking at me from an embassy window and a curtain being slowly pushed aside in a window across the street.

German and Russian eyes were watching us! Our conversation might be interpreted in a way harmful to both of us. I soon lost the woman from my sight but she never left my mind. Her tragic eyes, weighing the advantages of death and life, are not a thing to be forgotten.

Chapter 18

Two hours before I was ready to leave for Paris in October, 1937, a friend phoned and said that she must see me at once. She came to tell me that Knrl Bauman, the head of the Scientific Department of the Communist party's Central Committee, the father of Yura's best friend, Volik, had been arrested the night before. She thought I ought to tell Yura before I went abroad. If he found it out next day at school and had no one to talk about it to, it might upset him too much, she said.

Yura had many friends but he loved no one as he did Volik. I shared this feeling. There was a great charm in the blond, bashful big boy who showed the fine combination of gentleness and great strength. Whenever Yura visited him, he came home fascinated by the wonderful atmosphere of Volik's home. Karl Bauman was an old revolutionary of Latvian descent. For many years he had held important jobs in the Communist party. Several years ago he had been the party's representative in Central Asia where he organized the struggle against the wild Basmachi hillanen who rebelled against the Soviet government. One day the Basmachi made an attempt on his life. His wife, a handsome llkrainian, threw herself in front of him and was shot in the head. The government sent her abroad for a cvire. Back in Moscow she always had the services of the Kremlin's best medical authorities. She remained an invalid forever. She could stand neither light nor noise and the slightest excitement made her sick. The government gave them a large quiet apartment in Moscow and a fine country house on the Moscow River so that she should have all the calm and care she needed. Her room was always half-dark, the walls and floors were heavily carpeted, and everybody in the house talked quietly. This brought into their home a gentle and peaceful atmosphere so unusual in crowded Moscow apartments.

The family—they had also two daughters and there were two grandmothers living with them—^was very closely knit. Yura was impressed by the whole family but mostly by the glory of Bauman's past and by his present influential position. Whenever Bauman went svranming with the boys or took them for a ride in his car, Yura was delighted. And now this Soviet leader to whom he looked up with such unquestioned admiration had been arrested. It was not easy for me to tell it to Yura; I was all confused myself. I had to do it quickly, however, because I had another job on my hands before the train left. While I was breaking the sad news to Yura, I decided to perform a similar operation on Vitya for the father of his best friend had also been arrested some time ago. It was a sad story—^typical of many one heard those days.

It begins in the winter of 1933 when in the office of the German school I saw a woman whose sad face impressed me. I could not very well walk over and ask her why

she was sad. She did not look like one begging for sympathy, but when half an hour later I saw her waiting at my bus stop, I spoke to her.

She told me that they had arrived a few weeks earlier from Nazi Germany and that her boy was having a hard time getting adjusted to Soviet life. We discovered that he was in Vitya's class. I told her that we always had a houseful of boys and that we would be glad to welcome her son. When Vitya heard of this, he was very pleased.

"You remember, I told you the other day that a new boy came and that I thought we would become real friends.? Weil, that is the boy."

The next day the boy, Lotar, came and he came almost every day throughout the following years. The friendship between these two boys was a touching thing to watch.

Lotar's father, a huge German with an honest, open face, was a factory worker in Germany before he became a professional revolutionary. Lotar's mother came from a German Social-Democratic family. Both had the high moral standards and best traditions of the pre-Hitler class-conscious workers. When the Reichstag fire gave the signal for Hitler's anti-Red terror, Lotar's father went into hiding. When the Gestapo came and did not find him, they beat up his wife in the most bestial way in the presence of Lotar and his little sister. She remained deaf in one ear. Shortly thereafter the family moved to the Soviet Union.

There was always a deep mystery around the father's comings and goings from Moscow and, without ever mentioning it, one could see the family worry when he was away. I have every reason to believe that he was doing underground anti-Nazi work somewhere in

Europe, the kind of work which we think is the essence of heroism and deserves great admiration.

Lotar was like a third son in our family. During Louis's absences we had an extra bed and Lotar stayed with us for weeks. When there was no extra bed, the boys put their mattresses on the floor and the three of them slept there.

Lotar and his little sister spent the summer of 1937 in a camp. Vitya was with his friend, Friedrich Wolf's younger son, Koni, on a collective farm. When Vitya phoned Lotar upon his return to Moscow, Lotar, unlike his usual self, used every excuse to avoid seeing him. Vitya was quite disturbed. One day, at an hour when Lotar knew Vitya could not be home, he brought a note from his mother. She wrote that a month ago her husband had been arrested by the GPU and that Lotar was inconsolable. Many of their former friends had turned away from them and she would not blame me if I too would not want my son to associate with the son of an arrested man. But she wanted to make it less painful for Lotar, who had already suffered enough in his young life. She asked me to have a friendly talk with him.

Lotar knew the contents of the note and his eyes watched me full of anxiety. I tore up the note and told him that nothing had happened as far as his friendship with Vitya was concerned and that he should regard our home as his just as it had been. We decided not to tell Vitya about the arrest of Lotar's father. But now, before my departure for abroad, I felt in Vitya's case as in Yura's that it would be worse if he

found it out while I was away. It was not an easy job to explain to them why perfectly loyal men were put into prison. My last impression when my train pulled out of the Moscow station on that sunny October day was of two pairs of unhappy and forlorn eyes.

My scales tipped alarmingly low on the negative side. But I was not ready to admit defeat yet. I was going abroad where I knew many searching questions about Russia would be asked of me and I avidly looked for encouragement wherever I could find it. The election campaign which was in full swing in October, 1937, seemed an excellent trump card.

Irreparable mistakes were made, freedom was stifled, and people were being shot, but democracy still loomed on the Soviet horizon, I thought. The Soviet Union was going to elect its own representatives freely, without any pressure. It is true that many who would have been elected a year earlier had meanwhile disappeared in the purge, but I trusted the Russians to elect the proper men in a secret and free election. The press printed the election ballot with spaces for several names. A campaign started for the candidates. Electoral committees for each district were elected at meetings. I attended some of them and did not like the way the official spokesmen read prepared lists with names which the audience usually accepted as a whole. I did not like it when a friend, elected to her district election committee, was told one day to resign because her husband's chief had been arrested. But I brushed all this aside. I would not let it spoil the hopes I had for a truly democratic election. This and Soviet help to Loyalist Spain were the only bright spots in the Soviet picture when I went abroad in October, 1937.

Some weeks later we had dinner in London with the British M. P., George Russell Strauss, his wife Patricia, and a few other people. Strauss asked me to explain to him what kind of elections were about to be held in the Soviet Union with a one-man ballot. I was amazed at the ignorance of the usually well-informed Strauss and proudly enlightened him by saying that the Soviet elector would have several candidates from whom to choose.

"How queer," he said. "I had it from a very good source that only one candidate would be allowed."

I promised to bring him proof that I was right. Next day I read the latest Soviet newspapers, which I had not seen for several weeks. I found no trace of the old ballot. Instead the papers hailed the "deeply democratic" meaning of a one-candidate ballot. The most eloquent words could not make me see how a one-man ballot could be called democracy. When I next saw Strauss, the one-man ballot was a much-discussed unmistakable fact. He was tactful enough not to raise the question again. On that trip, I often found how painful a subject the Soviet Union had become and with how much tact most people I met touched the aching wound. I was thankful to the British for that.

I returned to Moscow in the middle of December, 1937, a few days after the elections. The city was still in festive attire. It had been truly impressive, so everybody told me.

An American friend, otherwise deeply depressed by the purge, said that on that day she forgot all the troubles and was gay again.

“This is,” she said, “how I always dreamt of a national holiday under socialism. A whole city turning out singing and dancing in the streets.”

The Russians to whom I spoke did not seem to mind the change in the ballot and they were under the most sincere impression that on December 12 they had freely chosen their own candidates. A friend, when I asked about it, said:

“What’s the difference? At our election meeting we unanimously decided to elect the one candidate. Not one among the thousands objected.”

There was nothing to say. The Russians were taken in by the spectacular pageantry of the performance and by the machine-gun-like propaganda and did not stop to think of the substance of democracy. Most people who could think, question, analyze, argue, or disagree were dead or in prison, and so it was easy almost overnight to change a matter of such immense importance as an election ballot without the slightest adverse comment.

In our apartment everybody was still laughing about Niura on election day. Like everybody else, she had done her best and had gone to the polls. She felt very important walking through the streets, which were decorated with miles of red bunting and hundreds of smiling, pipe-smoking Stalin posters. Finally, she landed with her ballot in hand in the election booth where she found a chair, a table, and a pencil. After a few minutes had elapsed, the friend who was waiting for her became worried and called out:

“Anything happened, Niura?”

“No.”

“Well, why don’t you come out?”

“I don’t know what I’m supposed to do in here,” was the meek answer from inside the booth.

I also thought this funny. But several months later, in June, 1938, when other elections took place, I did not think it so funny any more. We were then living in the country and the entire population of our dacha went to vote. Like Niura, I walked in to the gayly decorated booth with my one-candidate ballot in hand, found 2 chair, a table, and a pencil. And exactly like Niura, I did not know how to vote. I knew that in elections one had to put a mark on a ballot. But where was I to put it on a ballot with one name? I admired the handsome face of the man I was told to elect and was glad at least about that. I finally took a pencil and made a mark opposite the only candidate’s name. I later found out that by doing so I voided my ballot. I also discovered that I was supposed to do nothing in the booth. The whole procedure was purely symbolic. It was meant to show that we were free, if we wanted, to tear the ballot to pieces or erase the name.

The first days after my return from England in December, 1937, were marred by the absence of our friend Adele. A few weeks earlier in Paris, reading a letter from Moscow, I cried out:

“Adele is arrested!”

Louis took the letter.

“Nonsense! She is sick but not arrested.”

The letter said: “We don’t have to worry any more about finding a new room for Adele. She was taken to a hospital the other day and will probably not come out very soon.”

Louis, born and raised in the United States, did not respond immediately to conspiracy. To fool the censor, sometimes he and I would make up names to use in our letters for friends and political leaders. He would exasperate me by innocently writing: “I couldn’t make out your letter. I forgot whom we decided to call Ivan Ivanovich.” Anyway, I understood that Adele was in prison.

Before the November 7 holiday, Adele had ordered some groceries delivered to our house. She came to tell r 1

Niura about it and as usual brought her laundry, which Niura, who was very fond of her, would wash and mend. This time Adele never came for her laundry and for the groceries, and no one ever saw her again. She was a devoted, good soul, wishing no harm to anyone. We missed her greatly and Niura often got sentimental over the little pile of oft-mended underwear which Adele had left on her last visit. Even now I dream of her as dead and cry in my sleep.

Though deeply upset by Adele and other sad news, I prepared the New Year’s tree. However bad things were, the atmosphere in the house must be as cheerful and normal as possible. The stores had a tremendous choice of very tasteful decorations, and watching the large lively crowds around the colorful gay counters no one would have suspected that there was anything wrong in the country. I was shocked to find the trademark “Made in Japan” on toys in many stores.

On my shopping tours in London and Paris this trademark would invariably call for a comment from me to the salesgirl on Fascism, boycott of Fascist goods, etc. I tried this in Moscow. The salesgirls had no idea what I was talking about. None of them had ever heard of a boycott of Fascist goods. One girl cheerfully said:

“Isn’t it wonderful to have gotten the Japanese toys just in time for the New Year?”

The thorough lack of understanding of a boycott against Fascism was amazing considering the way Russians felt about Republican Spain. That feeling was genuine and spontaneous, and had nothing to do with official propaganda. It did not come from a preference of Russians for Spain as such. It came solely from a natural sympathy for a people fighting Fascism. Russians were convinced anti-Fascists but they had lost their capacity for critical thinking. If the government saw no wrong in trading with Fascists, few would question it, especially since any foreign goods, from whatever source, was welcome in Russia.

Chapter 19

My personal life in Moscow had anything but improved after my return from abroad. The circle of friends stiH grew smaller. A girl who translated articles from American movie magazines for a Soviet film studio used to come to the house and I helped her with the translations. I grew fond of her, and the very delicious Russian candy—^brandied cherries in chocolates—^which she usually brought won my sons' hearts. When I returned she was gone. She had developed cancer before I left and I was anxious to hear from her. Through a common friend she sent me a message that her family had always objected strongly to her friendship with a foreigner's family, but now, after I had been abroad, they implored her not to go to my house. She even had to promise them never to call me from a pay station as others did who were afraid to visit me.

An old schoolmate of mine lived in Leningrad. On her frequent visits to Moscow we used to spend a lot of time together. In January, 1938, she phoned me to make an appointment in a museum. She told me that she had to promise her husband to break off relations wiffi me, and that her phone call and this meeting were strictly "illegah" I never saw her again.

This brought me many lonely hours. I was depressed to discover that it was getting hard for me to find work—who had always had more olfers of work than I could possibly handle.

Bela Kun, the leader of the Hungarian revolution of 1919, and for years one of the pillars of the Comintern, was director of a publishing house. Friends spoke to him about me and I went to see him. He gave me several letters of recommendation. I was extremely pleased, delivered the letters, and waited for work. Some time later Bela Kun and almost every one of his associates were arrested. I was awfully worried; I was afraid that those letters of recommendation would get their recipients into trouble.

A little later I got in touch with the head of the Translation Bureau of the Foreign Workers Publishing House. He promised to send me work in a few days. Instead I heard of his arrest.

One day I went to see one of the heads of the State Publishing House. I showed him a few books which I offered to translate. I had among others I. J. Singer's Brothers Ashkenasi. I told him that the last part was antiSoviet and would have to be eliminated but that the book on the whole would be of great interest to the Soviet reader. He was paging through the book while I talked. When Lsaid "anti-Soviet," he literally dropped the book as if it burned him. There could be no question of translating it.

Arthur Koestler's book on Spain interested him. He asked me about the author. I told him about his exploits in Spain and mentioned that he was at present in Palestine. "What is he doing there?"

"I don't know."

This disturbed him. He asked me many questions. Not a single one about my qualifications as a translator but many about my family and my trips abroad and why Louis was in Spain and not in Moscow. A fine personality, an excellent literary critic in the past, this official was now concerned only with not doing anything which would cause his arrest or worse. Many publishers and editors had paid heavily for the alleged sins of their authors. And since doing nothing was the safest course to follow, he followed it as did the others, by printing classics and those Soviet authors whose reputation was still above reproach. Our visit ended in polite words but no work for me.

I had translated a book on the International Brigade in Spain. A Hungarian, Samuéli, whose brother had been one of the leaders of the Hungarian revolution in 1919, was a member of the Moscow Soviet and an ardent antiFascist. Many of his old comrades were fighting in the International Brigade. He wanted to do his bit too. He collected essays and articles by Gustav Regler, Ludvtig Renn, Ralph Bates, Ralph Fox, Andre Malraux, and others into a glorious memorial for the International Brigade. I was proud when Samuéli asked me to do the translation. Soon after the book appeared, Samuéli disappeared from his office and the press called him an "enemy of the people." I knew what these words meant and hated to think of his wife and their three small children. The book on the International Brigade was withdrawn from circulation. In my search for work, I was careful not to mention this job, which I had done with so much love and enthusiasm.

I did a series of technical translations for a scientific [181] institute. Though they were completely unpolitical, somebody else had to accept the assignment in his name. I could never have gotten it in my own name. I was the wife of a foreigner.

Since I had more time on my hands than I cared for I became a passionate knitter. In those hard days knitting brought relief to many Soviet women whose nerves were in need of soothing. I was lucky enough to possess a small supply of foreign wool which I endlessly knitted and reknitted. Russian women had no foreign wool and there was no Russian wool in the stores. But knit they must and in this too they showed admirable ingenuity. Old mended panties and sweaters, grandmother's bedjackets, worn-out socks and shawls were ripped with endless patience, the thread straightened out and fastened together, sometimes dyed. It took many evenings to prepare wool for a pair of baby socks. ICnitting and crochet needles were much-sought articles too. Many used home-made ones, others hunted the city for foreign needles. I had several sets and gave them to women who, after the disappearance of their husbands, turned to knitting as a means of hvelihood. A knitting fashion booklet which sold for a dime or went free with a purchase of wool in New York could easily fetch the equivalent of a dollar in Moscow. The elevator women in our house knitted to supplement their modest income. They ripped up old blankets brought years ago from their village and oldfashioned

undershirts and headkerchiefs. We often sat together throughout evenings trying out new patterns.

Those elevator women were poorly paid. They occasionally expressed displeasure with the difficulties they encountered in everyday life, with the lack of some commodities and the high prices of others. But they were never critical of the political situation. Executions of old political leaders and young factory directors, lack of democracy and freedom did not disturb them. They had their modest livelihood; they had the same rights or lack of rights which everyone else had; they had at their disposal evening schools where they could prepare themselves for better jobs; their younger children went to schools, the older ones had jobs and looked serenely to their future. Had I told them that I missed spiritual security, which was more important to me than material welfare, they would not have known what I meant.

Having a great deal of free time, I devoted more hours daily to my work in the boys' schools. It helped to kill my day but did not always relieve my heartaches. Years ago, Yura's school had been Moscow's most aristocratic school where the Soviet elite sent their children. Stalin's boy went there. But the Commissariat of Education justly felt that it was wrong to have the children of so many important people in one school. A large number of them, among them Stalin's son, were transferred to other schools, and in their place came pupils of neighborhood schools, mostly workers' children. But several children of prominent parents still remained: Commissar of Heavy Industry Ordzhonikidze's daughter. Food Commissar Mikoyan's five sons, the daughters of Radek and of Assistant Foreign Commissar Kresrinsky, the sons of Commissar of Foreign Trade Rosengoltz and of Assistant Commissar of Heavy Industry Piatakov and many more of lesser fame but important enough to be purged. Before the purge, the parents' meetings at school had been lively and full of fun. Krestinsky especially amused us with his quick, clever repartee. He and Mikoyan's wife often disagreed on children's behavior. No wonder. Elis Natasha r i8^ 1 was a quiet girl easy to manage while Mikoyan's five dark little devils brought the roof down at school.

The school buzzed with rumors of the purge. Yura had his own way of checking them. He would go into a store and ask for the picture of the leader rumored under arrest. If his picture was "out of print" the rumor was correct. There could be a shortage of shoestrings, trousers, theater tickets, fish food, newspapers, flowers, but never of portraits of prominent Soviet leaders. The disappearance of pictures was often the only notification of an arrest. One morning Yura, all excited, woke us:

"Kossior is arrested!"

Bald-headed, moon-faced Kossior was a member of the all-powerful Politbureau. In preparation for the 1938 elections, all Moscow houses were decorated with portraits of the prominent candidates. The front of our house was plastered with huge portraits of all members of the Politbureau. Leaving the house to go to school, Yura noticed that during the night the picture of Kossior which had hung right under our kitchen window had been removed. Kossior had been the chief Communist administrator of the Ukraine. He thus ruled about 45,000,000 people. He had been one of the top ten public figures

in the Soviet Union and an outstanding Stalinist. He had never been in any opposition. When he was purged no word appeared in the press. No announcement was made of his arrest. No charge against him was published. He just disappeared without a trace and he has never been heard of from that day to this. Only the suppression of his photograph told the observing citizen that Kossior had been liquidated.

During the trials, Yura could have given foreign correspondents a great deal of "human interest stuff." At his school, the children of Krestinsky, Drobnis, Pktakov, and Rosengoltz behaved like heroes during the trials of their fathers. Krestinsky's Natasha, his only child, adored her father. She came to school every day of the trial, not even missing the day her father was sentenced to death. Yura said she was as white as chalk and her swollen eyes constantly filled with tears on that day. She denounced her father as a traitor at a school meeting two days after his execution. Was it the animal instinct of self-preservation or a monstrous trust in the infallibility of the Soviet government which made her do this? It is hard for me to believe that Natasha thought her father guilty of all the crimes he was accused of at the trial. I for one did not think him guilty. I knew him and never for a second doubted his sincerity, honesty, and devotion to the Soviet cause. Of course, he might have disagreed with the official Stalin line on some occasion. Talking of Krestinsky and the others at the trial, an American newspaperman said;

"When I hear that these old Bolsheviks have to die because they all disagreed with Stalin who alone was always right, I have to think of the old joke about the whole company being out of step with Jackie. Could it be that Jackie is out of step?"

Yura was obviously disturbed by the misfortunes which overtook some of his schoolmates but I had to be careful not to make harsh remarks or to voice criticism in his presence. Soviet schools have a tremendous hold on their pupils and from their earliest age they succeed in instilling in the children the idea that the Soviet government is infallible. Yura and Vitya were no different from other children. Had they known my true feelings then, it would only have disturbed them without helping them.

I often warned that the regimented thinking to which the boys were submitted would ruin their good human qualities. But beneath their regimented surface they were alive.

Once, at the height of the purge, I received a telephone call from a friend telling me of the desperate situation of a young woman whose husband was arrested and who was left literally in the street because everyone she knew was afraid to let her in. I was afraid too and said so in disguised words, of course. When I hung up, Yura asked me what the conversation was about. I told him. He was outraged at my cowardice and insisted that I immediately call back and offer the poor woman hospitality. I did it. The woman stayed with us for a few days. Her visit brought us a great deal of anguish but I was happy about Yura's reaction to it. The boys showed their human feelings especially in their relations to their friends whose fathers had suffered during the purge.

Several weeks after his father's arrest Volik Bauman, Yura's best friend, disappeared mysteriously. Though Yura knew very well that he risked being expelled from school for it, he spent hours in the evening around Volik's house waiting for one of the sisters or grandmothers to come out. He learned from them that Volik's mother had been arrested too and that a few days later GPU agents came and told Volik to take his school books and come along. Despite their endless inquiries, the worried women could learn nothing about the fourteen-year-old boy, his father, or his invalid mother.

I thought of this unhappy family and of thousands of other unhappy families when in November, 1938, during the Jewish pogroms in Germany, the Berlin correspondent of the Pravda sent an indignant dispatch to his paper:

"The families of the Jews attested yesterday still were uninformed about the whereabouts of the prisoners! Another proof of the cruelty of the Nazi barbarians!"

Yura kept prowling around Volik's house until every one of the family had gone away and strangers moved in. He was persistent and found out from neighbors that one of the sisters had gone to a small place out of town. Without knowing her exact address he went there but found no trace of her. I knew it was dangerous for him to be interested in the fate of this purged family. And if the school had found out about it, he would have been in serious difficulty. But I was happy that he showed courage and loyalty.

Though we seldom talked about it, I knew how preoccupied Yura's mind was with Volik. Several months after his disappearance, Yura received a letter from him from a distant children's home. It was a noncommittal letter giving his address and telling what grade he was in and how he was getting on with his studies. Yura, happy now, controlled his joy and also wrote a restrained letter about school. They corresponded until our departure from Moscow.

Vitya was luckier with Lotar. They spent all their free time together until our last day in Russia. Lotar's mother, for years ill with arthritis, grew paler and thinner every day. Only her expressive steel-gray eyes remained alive in her emaciated body. The little sister suffered from anemia and was sick in bed more often than she was at school.

They were much too proud to say anything or to accept help but they were amply starving, like so many other families of purged foreign Communists and Soviet citizens. Lotar's mother showed an unusual talent in stretching out the little food which came her way. Her neighbors told me that she never—throughout the months and years when she lived in mortal fear that her imprisoned husband would be shot—lost her courage and her pride. But she was a very sick woman and even the bravest spirit needs bread, medicine, and a winter coat. In the middle of 1941 a letter reached Vitya in New York from a Moscow friend containing the words: "Lotar's daddy is dead." A few days later Vitya had a short note from Lotar: "I hope we will meet some day. We are leaving Moscow tonight. We are going home." We never found out whether they were deported to Germany or, having learned that the father had died, they decided that it was senseless to stay in Moscow and starve to death. In any event, a

passionate Communist family, the father shot by the Bolsheviks, was sent "home" to Nazi Germany.

Many tragedies occurred in Yura's school during the purge but no more than in Vitya's German school. The misery among German Communists in Moscow, people who had sought refuge in the Soviet Union from the Nazi secret police, was great. They were arrested, shot, or deported into the arms of the Gestapo. Almost every morning one or two children walked in to the principal's office all in tears. Father or mother or both arrested. No one to take care of the child. Sometimes the GPU sent the children to a home, but often they were left to their own fate. Friends had either been arrested or were scared to death to make an appearance. Many of us would gladly have opened our homes to as many children as possible. Who cared about being crowded or uncomfortable if a child could be saved from loneliness and misery?

But charity to children of purge victims was officially frowned upon. We helped "illegally."

About three hundred of the school children of the German school lived in the Schutzbund-Heim, which the city of Moscow donated in 1934 for the children of the Vienna workingmen who had fought back when the reactionary Austrian government shelled their tenements with cannon. When they arrived in 1934 the children were feted and petted. Three years later their house was a place of desolation. When Hitler occupied Austria in 1938, the Schutzbundler, who until then had at least the doubtful protection of the Austrian legation in case of arrest, lost even that. Many were arrested and some deported to Austria to face concentration camp or death.

For a while the teachers were a great source of comfort to the children. A group of German anti-Fascist teachers, who had left Germany after Hitler, brought a fresh young spirit into the Moscow German school. They were loved by the pupils, and the Parents' Council worked hand in hand with them. I knew some of them well and could vouch for their loyalty. Especially two, the red-haired Kurt and his young wife, Isolde, inspired the greatest confidence in everyone who knew them. He was a geography teacher and at the same time one of the best experts in the Soviet Geographical Institute. They had married the day they both left high school. They were a clean, ideal young couple. One morning Isolde, who taught literature, reported to the school principal that Kurt had been arrested during the night. She entered upon the thorny path of waiting for hours in line with many others who were trying to get a sign of life from a loved one. Two months passed. No word from or about Kurt. Then one day Isolde received an official order to leave the country within three days. She and Kurt had fled Germany as anti-Hitlerites. She faced concentration camp upon her return to Germany. She knew little Russian and I translated all her touching appeals to Stalin, Kalinin, and the GPU chief, Yezhov, who was later purged himself. She pleaded her innocence, asked to be arrested and exiled, but not to be sent to Germany where she might face death. Her appeals had no effect. She never received an answer and had to leave.

“I will throw myself out of the train,” she sobbed. “I can’t go back to Nazi Germany and leave Kurt behind in a Soviet prison separated from me forever.” The last we saw of her was when she boarded in Moscow the train for the Polish frontier.

Another teacher taught science and knew nothing but this one subject and was not interested in anything else. He was also popular with the children and his arrest, following soon after Kurt’s, greatly upset and confused them. He was heard of about eight months later. From a Godforsaken hole in eastern Siberia he wrote a heartwringing appeal to send him a few roubles and some clothes. He was starving, had no toothpaste and soap, and his clothes were falling off his body from the hard work he was doing. The authorities did not provide any clothing. On the other hand, only nearest relatives were permitted to send packages, provided, of course, they were permitted to know the whereabouts of the exiled person. This young teacher, like many other foreigners, had no relatives in Russia. His tragic letter, in which he wrote that he was sent to Siberia for ten years without a hint of investigation, interrogation, or trial, was a voice crying in the wilderness.

Arrests of teachers and parents brought much distress into the lives of the children. But the remaining teachers and an active, energetic Parents’ Council worked hard to make the school pleasant for the children and give them a moral support through it. We increased the extracurricular activities, planned excursions, and often held meetings with the parents. Pupils as well as their families stuck together and the presence of the familiar congenial school surroundings was a great consolation for the children whose lives were shaken at their roots.

In January, 1938, a couple of days after the two weeks’ winter vacation ended, a notice was pasted on the school entrance that the German school was being closed immediately and the children transferred to Russian schools. The fact itself was a shocking blow. But why was it made so unnecessarily cruel? If it had to be done, we might have been told before the vacation. During these two weeks, parents and children could have adjusted themselves to the situation. Such decisions are not taken overnight anywhere and certainly not in Moscow. The authorities knew about it long ago. Why were we not informed? Why upset a child’s school year? Why transfer children with insufficient knowledge of Russian, without giving them a chance for preparation, to Russian schools? Why this ignoring of human feelings?

I was in a white rage. I broke into the principal’s office where a meeting with the teachers was being held, and declared that we parents were not going to stand for it, that we were going to protest to the Commissar of Education and demand that the school remain open at least until the end of the school year, that the children be given time to learn Russian, that a parents’ protest meeting be called immediately, and so on. The teachers were flabbergasted. Fiery outbursts in protesting government orders were a thing of a long-forgotten past. One of the teachers, a good friend, took me aside:

“Listen to me, quietly. There is nothing, absolutely nothing to do. We were called in this morning and told the news. Even the principal was not informed until late last night. The Commissar of Education will do nothing. The decision is not his, of course.

It came from much higher quarters. We feel exactly the way you do. But we have to behave and so do you. You cannot help and you will only hurt yourself. The Parents' Council is no more. You and the other members are just parents who have to look for a new school for their own children without feeling responsible for anything else. Do you understand me?"

Of course I understood. The Parents' Council was told to close up. I was not concerned over Vitya. He knew Russian well, was an easily adaptable boy, and would feel at home in any new school. But I knew how much misery this brought to hundreds of other children and to their parents. In a few days, after our useless efforts to alleviate the situation, the German school closed its doors.

It was not the only school to be closed. So was the American-English school, the Polish, and others. We were always proud of the foreign-language schools. They were part of the broad-minded Soviet national policy. Now they were gone. There was much speculation about the reasons. Some thought it was part of the new tendency of Russification, others that it was from fear of having concentration of foreign groups. No official explanation was ever given. We only had to obey.

Vitya entered an excellent school named after the great Norwegian explorer and humanitarian, Fridtjof Nansen, who had done so much to relieve the Russian famine after the civil war. A large portrait of Nansen hung in the big hall and brought a pleasant note into the school. The principal, who, eighteen years earlier, had opened this school amidst civil war and famine for a group of unwashed hungry children, had since devoted his whole life to it. The results were gratifying. The teachers were all first rate. The building was sunny and shone with cleanliness. Much attention was devoted to recreational activities. Scientific, literary, dramatic, political, and art groups met after school. An excellent gymnasium served athletes. There was a warm congenial atmosphere in the school and the children looked happy.

I soon became a member of the Parents' Council of Vitya's class and attended weekly meetings where the class adviser discussed class problems with us. I was also a member of Yura's class council and was able to see how formal and schematic the exactly identical procedure of the meetings was.

The music teacher in Vitya's school was affectionately and informally called Lenchka by her pupils. She was a sweet-looking blonde girl of about twenty-six. She walked on crutches. The history of her crippled legs was one of the school's legends. Lenchka was twelve when Lenin died in January, 1924. The day of his funeral was one of the coldest days Moscow could remember. Lenchka had a cold and, despite all her tears and pleading, her parents would not permit her to accompany them to Lenin's funeral. Her boots and coat were hidden away but Lenchka sneaked out of the house in canvas dippers and a shawl over her head and shoulders. She would not stay in the house on that day of national mourning. Like all Soviet children and most Soviet adults she worshiped the ground on which Lenin walked and the day of his funeral was the blackest day in her young life. She spent hours in deep snow, waiting among a half-frozen, patient crowd of over a million people. She did have her last

glance of Lenin. With a tear-stained face, shivering with cold and fever she came home in the evening. A few hours later in her delirium she wailingly called Lenin's name. A severe case of pleurisy was followed by an almost fatal double pneumonia and inflammation of the joints. When many months later she left the bed, her heart was weakened forever and she never fully recovered the use of her legs. She used to tell the children that it was her deep devotion to Lenin and the desire to follow his teachings which helped her to overcome all the handicaps, to study and to live a normal life. The children extended to her the deep love they all felt for Lenin. In May, 1938, Lenchka disappeared from the school and some time later we were told that she had died from a heart attack. No other information was given. Much later I heard the details from a chance acquaintance who lived in the same house with Lenchka. Her father, an old engineer, was arrested one night and while saying good-bye to him, Lenchka fell dead. Her weak heart gave out.

Fortunately, the children were not told of this and of other sad events. Those among them whom the purge had not directly touched continued to live their happy school life, surrounded by loving care and confident of the future. They were aware only of the advantages Soviet life gave them, of all that was being done to make their present and future bright and healthy.

Chapter 20

The hours spent among the school children at times helped me to forget the surrounding unhappiness. But never for long. I tried not to see or talk to anyone for days at a stretch so as not to hear any horrors. But I could not give up reading the newspapers and many a pang came when a familiar name in the press brought back reminiscences of happier days. In the trial of Yagoda, the former almighty chief of the GPll, his right hand and assistant of many years, Eugene Prokofiev, a good friend from the Genoa conference, was mentioned. I had never spoken to him since 1922 but I had often seen him on parades, in theaters, and at meetings. I read about him in the press and heard about him from common friends. He was shot. His wife was arrested. A few months earlier, after eighteen years of marriage, she had become pregnant for the first time. She gave birth to a dead child in prison. I heard about it through a woman who was in prison with her, one of the few persons ever released from a Soviet prison. The woman said that Prokofieva's wife was the one who helped to keep the spirit of the other women high and would not let them grow despondent. She brought her efficiency and intelligence as well as her kind heart into prison life. The women often cried. They were all separated from families and few were permitted to receive news. Many had children, others, like Prokofieva, husbands who had followed their chiefs in death. Prokofieva organized lectures and informal talks. She was responsible for order and cleanliness. On November 7, the anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution, Prokofieva declared a holiday; nobody was to cry on that day. She made a loyal Soviet speech on the revolution, they sang songs and exchanged reminiscences of the earlier revolutionary days.

Among the women in this prison was a dear friend of ours, Olga Tretiakova, the wife of Sergei Tretiakov, author of *Chinese Testament*. Olga was an unusually responsive person, always ready to help with a warm word or a good deed. She would have given her last drop of blood to know whether her husband was alive. But she was not told. Rumor had it that he was shot on the charge of being a Japanese spy. If he was that, then he deserves a prize for acting. He was the most militant Soviet anti-Fascist writer and, though not a member of the Communist party, the most convincing and eloquent one-hundred-per-cent party liner. Louis often disagreed with him on literary problems, but we were good friends. Both Tretiakovs will remain in the memory of many foreign writers and artists who had visited Moscow for Tretiakov had been the official host of these visitors with the special assignment to teach the foreigners to sympathize with the Soviets.

One day a short terse notice in the papers informed us that several high officials had been executed. There was no public trial. This meant that they were not willing to go through a public performance of confessing and calling themselves scoundrels; they therefore had to be shot without the performance.

One of these was Karakhan, Soviet ambassador to Turkey, the most handsome of all the prominent Bolsheviks. He was an Armenian and had the beautiful black eyes of his race. He had fine chiseled features, was graceful and quick. A good revolutionary and a personal friend and supporter of Stalin, at the same time he loved life and whatever pleasure life could bring. His affairs amouzeuses could have given endless food to gossip columns had the Soviet papers carried such. The lady love of his last years was the famous ballerina, Marina Semyonova. She was not arrested after his execution as so many other wives and sweethearts were, but when almost all the other members of the Bolshoi Theater staff, of which she was the star dancer, got Orders and titles and other insignia, she, the most exquisite dancer of all, the pride of the Soviet ballet, was left out. This was her punishment for having loved the charming Karakhan.

Another was Boris Zukerman, the head of the Foreign Office's Central Asiatic Department. He had a quiet and neat way of talking, working, and dressing. We spent a lot of time together in 1934 when I was in the Caucasian health resort of Kislovodsk where Louis came to see me. Zukerman lived in a sanatorium reserved for high party and government officials, and frequently invited us for afternoon tea or for the evening. This was during the period when men were told to shave regularly and take care of their clothes. The cue for this was given by Ordzhonikidze when he refused to receive the director of an important Siberian plant until the man had had a shave and changed his shirt. Since everything in the Soviet Union is usually exaggerated on one side or another,

Zukerman and his friends, though on vacation, were immaculately dressed in their best city suits, snow-white shirts, ties, and well-shined shoes. Louis, however, felt under no obligation and wore an open shirt with slacks and old sandals on bare feet. When he appeared thus dressed in the sanctuary of Soviet celebrities, Zukerman said:

"I am afraid, Fischer, that soon it will be impossible for a Soviet official to associate with a bourgeois journalist. Ordzhonikidze would not permit it."

Then there was Bukharin's trial, which brought back earlier years, the years I lived in Copenhagen during the First World War. There I had met him. He was slight, blond, had a small pointed beard, was quick in words, gestures, and thinking. With my sister, I had spent the summer of 1916 on a farm in Elsinore, the scene of Hamlet's life and death. Bukharin visited us there. He always entertained us with tricks, anecdotes, and puzzles. One night he was serious and spoke of his early youth. He told us of the struggle he had when, very young yet, he became interested in the revolution. He had dreamt of painting and wanted to devote his life to art. For a while he thought he could combine both but he soon found that it was impossible to divide one life between two such exacting gods as art and revolution. One had to be sacrificed. Art was the victim.

"It hurts even now to think of having given up art," he said.

In Denmark, Bukharin and I used to visit theaters and art galleries, go swimming and square-dancing together. Whatever he did, he was quicker and more brilliant than the others. These qualities plus his ever ready wit and happy disposition made him popular with opponents as well as with friends. Lenin frequently disagreed and argued with him in private and in the press but, like the rest of the Lenin family, he treated Bukharin with a parental affection. It needed an opponent with a heavy mind and a heavy hand to destroy a sparkling, brilliant mind and spirit like his. It is hard to think of Bukharin, the witty scintillating Bukharin, the very personification of life, dead, shot in the back, as rumor has it political prisoners are shot in Soviet prisons.

One of our closest friends in Moscow was the Foreign Office censor, Boris Mironov. He was a man in his forties who had spent his youth studying in western Europe. He had rough manners and some of the foreign correspondents disliked him. But when one knew him better it was easy to discover a soft, kind heart underneath. He led a happy family life with his wife in a very nice well-kept home. He had an excellent radio, good records, and walls covered with bookcases. Books were the passion. On free days they made the round of second-hand book shops. All the money he made by his brilliant articles was spent on books. He often bought adventure books for our boys.

Mironov competed with Radek in inventing and telling jokes. Often roars of laughter were heard from his office in the Press Department. Yura used to say that Mironov was for him the ideal of a fine Soviet intellectual. He liked him personally, his way of life, their orderly house, his writings. Once in our house Mironov was making fun of everything that was being said. I finally burst out:

“Is there nothing sacred for you in this world?”

He grew serious and said:

“Oh yes, there is: the Soviet Union.”

Mironov was arrested and in the March, 1938, he was accused of having sent information to Trotsky through a foreign correspondent whose identity remained a mystery. Yura had a friend who lived in Mironov's house. For weeks after his arrest the woman used to see a light burning till early morning hours in the Mironov's bedroom. Then there was no more light and the apartment was sealed. This meant that Mironov's wife had also been arrested. When Yura's friend told us this story, she added: “But his cousin is still all right.”

“He is still all right” became a code message. When meeting one another people asked, “Is everybody in your family all right?” They did not refer to physical health. When I came to New York in 1939, most of my conversations with old Moscovite New Yorkers consisted of “Is Z all right? Is T's husband all right? Did X remain all right after his son was shot?”

People in Moscow phoned friends and relatives in the morning and asked: “Are you all right?” in a disguised form: “Is Kolya's throat better? Didn't I forget my umbrella in your house? Aren't you late for work?” or similar questions the answers to which were thoroughly unimportant. The important thing was to hear a friend's voice over

the phone and to know that nothing had happened during the night and that he or she was “all right.”

It was a great strain to make a phone call to friends after not having heard from them for some time. Few people telephoned from their homes. The pay stations were very popular. How often my fingers shook when I put the coin into the slot. The seconds that elapsed before I heard a friendly voice answering seemed like hours. The party on the other side of the wire felt exactly the same way. But, of course, we tried hard to conceal our emotion, and chatted about the weather, theater, children, and shopping. When an unfamiliar voice answered the phone, I rushed out of the booth, took a streetcar or subway to the opposite end of town and telephoned again to make sure.

The hours between eleven in the evening and two in the morning, the most popular hours for GPU arrests, were another nerve-breaking affair. A friend, an elderly doctor, lived in an apartment with seven other families. Several people were arrested in that apartment. The doctor once said:

“I spent four years at the front mending wrecked human bodies. I fought cholera and smallpox, and saw entire villages wiped out by the plagues. But I know nothing more horrible than listening in the middle of the night to heavy steps and waiting, waiting with nerves strained while thinking: at what door are ‘they’ going to knock?”

Few people went to bed before two.—As Irina, the bestgroomed and kindest of all my Russian friends, put it:

“What is the use of getting up and rushing around looking like a fright? I might just as well wait for ‘them’ and look my best.”

There was no reason for her to fear an arrest but so many people she knew as law-abiding loyal Soviet citizens had been arrested that she used to say:

“I soon will be ashamed not to be in prison with all the best people.”

However, in Irina’s case, there might have been a reason for official suspicion. She had a warm heart and did not believe in deserting friends in need. She was one of the few who had the courage to visit families of purge victims and to help them with money, food, and clothing. She was even brave enough to ask other people to help. Once she sent out an SOS to collect things for children both of whose parents were arrested. Another time she made her friends contribute old gloves, belts, and any odd bits of leather to help the wife of an executed man earn a living by making artificial flowers. For another, she collected wool and knitting needles. And she always had a hot meal and a bed for one from whom all friends had turned away.

It required heroic courage to help families of the “enemies of the people.” Irina had it and she kept many of us from losing our shattered faith in human nature completely. Irina was a perfectly unpolitical person and what she did was from sheer love of human beings. Few had the courage of this girl and some paid a high price for not having it—[^]the price of nerves shattered by conscience and the thought of the friends they might have succored had they not been so fearful of their own safety. Often the arrests came very near home. I remember one terrible scene. In the summer of 1938 I came in to

town from the country by train. On my train traveled a mother with her two young children, all three dressed in white, gay, laughing. She was met at the Moscow railroad station by two GPll men who told her that she was under arrest. They rudely tore the children away from her. The woman fought like a fury. The primitive instinct of a mother defending her little ones effaced all traces of refinement and civilization. She screamed and scratched and bit. Six men were needed to drag her—she would not walk—^through the long station hall to a truck into which she was brutally shoved. The hundreds who witnessed the scene stood in dead silence.

This scene at the railroad station was unusual. Arrests as a rule were made quietly and not in public places. Dozens of people had been arrested in our house and only once did I hear, in the quiet of a winter night, the desperate shouts of a man as he was led away: “You know I am innocent! ”

For years Moscow had been proud of a young Soviet woman named Betty Gian, who held the important job of director of the Park of Culture and Rest. The park had an amusement area, sports, square and round dancing, boating, folk singing, sun-bathing, ever-changing flower beds, military drills, parachute towers, free legal consultation, art exhibits, theaters, movies, restaurants, shooting galleries. It had a huge open-air theater, playgrounds for older children, a place where one could check a child or recite poetry, where one could be part of a noisy Coney Island crowd or borrow a book and read in seclusion under century-old trees.

For many years Betty Gian had managed the huge enterprise to everybody’s satisfaction. Foreign tourists were brought in groups to her to hear of Russia’s achievements in recreational activities. Suddenly a nasty note crept into the press whenever the park was mentioned. It promised no good.

Betty Gian lived in our house with her little daughter. Her apartment was friendly and sunny. It had little furniture but a lot of gay cretonne and bright rugs. Her pride was the flowers on her balcony. They were beautiful and she tended them with love. We occasionally exchanged a few words while watering our flowers in the evening. Then one day hers began to droop and soon they withered: Betty Gian had been arrested. The door of the room leading to the balcony was sealed, so that no one could water the flowers. For days her little girl kept asking everybody: “Gde moya mamochka?” (Where is my mammie.?) Then the little girl was taken away by an aunt. New people moved into the apartment. It was fall and they did not bother to clean the flower boxes on the balcony. Nothing remained of one of the best-known women in Moscow but dead plants with heads hanging low as if in mourning.

It would take more than this book to tell all the sad stories I witnessed but there is one more I must mention. When I was a little girl, I was very fond of one of my sister’s friends. Our paths often crossed in life. When I entered college in Switzerland, she was in her last year of medical school there. When I worked in the Soviet Railroad Mission in Berlin, her husband, a leading Soviet railroad engineer, was one of my chiefs. When I visited the health resort Kislovodsk in the Caucasus several years in succession, she and her husband were there at the same time and we lived in the same hotel. He did not

desert Russia in November, 1917, as so many engineers did when the Bolsheviks took power. He worked loyally for the Soviet government and was considered an outstanding railroad expert. He had always suffered from a heart ailment, and from the early thirties his heart condition kept him at home for months at a stretch. His assistants came to the house and worked with him there. Though he was a bedridden invalid by the time of the purge, he was arrested. The despair of his wife was endless. Her mind became affected by the blow and she was afraid to be in a room with the door closed. She said that if the GPU came to arrest her, she would throw herself out of the window.

"You see, I will have to do it,"*she would say with a [204] wandering smile, "because I really cannot stay in a room when the door is closed and prison doors are always closed."

They did come for her, the gentle woman who could not hurt a fly. The moment she heard the GPU men enter the apartment she threw herself out of the fourth-floor window and was instantly killed.

Thus one after another people one knew, loved, and respected—disappeared. The favorite pastime of generations of Russians, the favorite pastime in our house— political discussions— became a thing of the past. Free political discussion had disappeared from the pages of the press and public platforms years ago. But there were always people who had permitted themselves, in conversations with friends, to air an opinion on Soviet politics. Now most of them were gone, dead or behind prison bars. The lively political arguments in our house changed into a whispered conversation among trusted intimate friends. All those conversations centered around the question uppermost in people's minds: the reasons for the purge.

One evening, in our apartment, an old Bolshevik said in a hushed voice:

"Now that Stalin has exterminated the Trotskyist opposition and the right-wing opposition, he turns his wrath against us, old Bolsheviks, his former associates, because we are 'people with memories,' born sufficiently long ago to remember the past and the traditions of the revolution. He persecutes us for no other reason than our memory."

I understand that remark much better now in the light of what has happened since then. Beginning in 1955, Stalin started introducing many deep changes in

Soviet life. He has restored Russian nationalism and PanSlavism, the Russian czars' pet child. He has recognized the old leadership of the Greek Orthodox Church. He has abolished coeducation and encouraged the formation of a military caste. He has dissolved the Third International and topped the "Internationale" hymn. He has gone in for territorial expansion. He has glorified princes and czars and czarist generals, who were always hated by the Soviet people. These changes have altered the whole character of the Bolshevik regime and of the world Communist movement. It is these changes that made it possible for the American Communists to come out for free enterprise. Stalin is a very shrewd statesman. He knew in advance that many good Bolsheviks would object to these innovations. He realized that men like Bukharin, Zinoviev, Rakovsky, Radek, Ossinsky, and Tomsky would stick out like sore thumbs if he retreated from

the revolution. So he liquidated them and anyone else who possibly could ever raise a voice in protest.

Many of our private debates centered around the confessions of the defendants at the Moscow trials. They boiled down to this: One side says the trials were frameups and that Bukharin, Piatakov, Krestinsky, and Rakovsky could not have been spies of foreign governments. The other side says: "What about the confessions?" The Soviet government and Soviet sympathizers abroad based their whole case for belief in the trials on the truth of the confessions and on nothing else. Apart from the confessions, no proof of the guilt of the accused was ever presented at the trials or anywhere else. I have seen many impassioned declarations and superficial analyses of their guilt—but no proof. We all knew how the GPU operates. For years it had watched the accused as it watches all Soviet officials. It censored their mail, it listened to their phone calls, it watched their movements. And yet the Soviet prosecutor had no shred of evidence to present at the trials, no letter or note or conversation. He had only the self-denunciatory confessions on which to base his plea for the death sentences.

Now, the confessions were obtained in Soviet prisons. Some of the accused confessed three months after their arrest, some eight months or more after their arrest. But if the entire Soviet case rested on these confessions and nothing else, on what grounds were the men arrested in the first place?

If—as it seldom happened—a foreigner, American or European, participated in our hushed debate behind carefully closed doors, he was even more at a loss than the Russians to understand the arrests and executions. The foreigner's own experience led him to assume that when a government arrests or shoots a person, he must have committed a crime. But it does not work the same way in dictatorship. Soviet citizens have been "liquidated" because the government thought they knew too much, or were too popular, or might some day oppose a change in policy, or had been friendly with a victim of the purge, or had differed with or quarreled with a high official. There are no free newspapers or political independents in Russia and it is therefore much easier there to kill or banish a citizen who is not guilty and not proved guilty. He has no redress. The Soviet government doesn't have to be afraid that the press or radio or a member of Congress will criticize it or raise a scandal.

With my few remaining friends we would also speculate on the reasons for the confessions. We naturally rejected the theory that it was the Dostoyevsky in the accused leaders that made them confess. Those men were fighting revolutionists, men of action capable of great decisions and fierce determination; they were not Dostoyevsky types.

It was Louis's idea that the accused had an understanding with the state prosecuting attorney. He found proof of this in the printed verbatim records of the trials. Louis felt that the accused had been promised their lives if they confessed. They might have doubted Stalin's readiness to keep the promise. But on the verge of death, a man will take a 1 to 99 chance of remaining alive.

Some of my friends and I thought of another motive for the confessions: Perhaps the defendants felt that in making the confessions and taking the blame for Stalin's

blunders, as they did at the trials, they were performing one last service to the revolution which they loved and to which they remained loyal. We guessed that this was the basis on which the prosecutor and examiners appealed to them in prison to confess. The GPU, we believed, used no torture. It used revolutionary persuasion.

Whatever methods the GPU used, it worked with only a few. Those who confessed constituted a very small fraction of those who were purged. The vast majority of executed and exiled Bolsheviks had refused to confess. Only those who confessed appeared in the Moscow trials, and they were a mere handful compared to the many thousands who would not recite an officially prepared confession.

These questions which disturbed our small circle deeply and to which we found no satisfactory answers bothered only a small minority of Russians. The bulk of the Soviet population has been taught to accept the following formula: There are two possible rulers in the

Soviet Union—the Soviet government, alias the Communist party, alias the Politbureau, alias Stalin—or landlords, factory owners, capitalist exploiters, German Fascists, and Japanese generals. There is nothing in between. Any attempt to oppose the Soviet government, which doubtlessly had the support of the population, was therefore considered tantamount to an attempt to restore the landowners, capitalist exploiters, etc., in Russia. This was the burden of Stalin's propaganda, and it had sunk deeply into the people's minds.

Chapter 21

I BEGAN to suffocate in Moscow from lack of freedom. It was an abstract longing for freedom. I simply wanted to say aloud the thoughts I had in my head, to be able to say what play, book, movie, person I liked or disliked. It depressed me, after having seen a play and found it awful, to read in the Pravda that this was the greatest play ever produced in the Soviet Union, after which I had to keep my own opinion strictly to myself. Yura and I once read a book which we both thought excellent. Our sorrow was great when one morning at breakfast we read in the Pravda how full of political mistakes the book was and how harmful for Soviet readers. We sat silently without looking at each other. There was nothing to say.

I resented the mental insecurity and confusion in which we lived. Once I was in a friend's house when she was tearing up Marshal Yegorov's picture after his execution. Her eight-year-old son, who was devoted to the Red Army leaders, walked into the room.

"What are you doing?" he cried.

She explained to him that Yegorov had been shot as a traitor. With wide open eyes, his arms stretched out in a gesture of despair, the boy said:

"Now I don't understand anything any more," and left the room with tears in his eyes.

"I know exactly how he feels," said his mother sadly, "because I feel just as lost as he does."

People were forced to become insincere and cowardly. In 1938 Yura was ill and had to stay away from school for some time. To show their sympathy, his classmates, during his absence, elected him class chairman. A few weeks after his return to school, I got a phone call from the school secretary asking me to come immediately. I was sure that Yura had met with an accident and was therefore greatly relieved when she said that he had committed a serious breach of discipline. When I arrived, a meeting was called. Yura's class, the entire administration with the principal at the head, the pioneer leaders, and several teachers were to judge my criminal son.

During a lesson he had felt that the teacher was unjust to a boy. He got up, said so, and left the classroom in protest. "Incitement to open rebellion," the principal called it. The trial was a miniature of the big Moscow trials which I had witnessed more than once. Every speaker said exactly what was expected of him under the circumstances in almost identical expressions. It was not rehearsed, of course, but a Russian knows well what he is expected to say and the Soviet political vocabulary had dwindled to so few phrases that it was easy to say the correct thing. The principal thundered against poor

Yura, who, in expectation of the verdict, was getting smaller and paler every minute. The principal demanded the highest punishment: expulsion from school. I was to be the last speaker.

The whole performance was so shameful and so at variance with all principles of decency and pedagogy that, had I followed my true impulse, I would have grabbed Yura, told them all what I thought of them, and gone home. But unfortunately I could not do so. True impulses were taboo. An insincere accusatory speech against my own son was expected of me unless I was ready to ruin his future in a Soviet school forever.

I behaved in the same hypocritical way everyone else did. I agreed with everything the other speakers said and did not even protest against the principal's hint of a "foreign background," which, I suspected, was the reason for the whole ugly performance. I only demanded leniency because Yura had been ill and was still weak. I said that this meeting and a decision to deprive him of the class chairmanship would be effective enough. To expel him from school would ruin him. I made the longest public speech in my life. But I was fighting for my son without being permitted to put up an honest, real fight. These hours were the most terrible Yura ever spent; to this day he insists that he was absolutely right in defending his classmate and that the teacher had been rude and unjust. These hours were no less trying for me. Of course, my heart ached for my son. But this was not the main thing. The whole meeting was a fake. It smelled of the Inquisition. Nobody was sincere and nobody meant a word he said. A day later it was forgotten. Yura continued to enjoy the same popularity in school after he was deprived of the class chairmanship. I continued to be active in parents' activities, visited the school almost daily, but never heard a mention of that incident.

Fear and insincerity dominated every field of life. In 1938 a new decree shortened the time of leave for women before and after childbirth. The previous law, which gave working women two months of paid vacation before and two months after childbirth was one of the most human and progressive of all Soviet laws and had always filled Russians with great pride. The change of the law was preceded in the press by an outpouring of the most hypocritical letters. "We do not know what to do with the many free weeks at home," some of them said. Or, "Women can work without harm to the very last moment of pregnancy, our mothers did it too," "Leisure demoralizes women," "Too much valuable time which could be given to our beloved fatherland is lost," "Nurseries can take better care of our babies than we mothers."

Somehow Stalin's name always found an honorary place in these false epistles full of dishonest flattery. In 1936 women's letters on the change of the abortion law spoke openly and sincerely of inadequate housing, insufficient nurseries, alarming shortages of baby goods. In 1938, when it was an open secret frequently mentioned in the press that housing and industry had made a menacing step backward compared to 1936, the letters untruthfully spoke of unprecedented abundance. Opinions privately expressed on the cut in childbirth leaves were in sharp discord with those appearing in the press.

Many Soviet writers had written books on their part in the revolution and civil war. Nikolai Virta also wrote such a book called Loneliness. It was not a bad book. But

there was nothing in it to evoke great enthusiasm, and the press reviews were lukewarm. Several months after the book appeared, the Fravda came out with a violent attack on all reviewers who did not praise this marvelous book to the sky.

What happened behind the scene is a guess, but most probably Stdhi had found time to read the book and he liked it. Overnight, Virta became one of the greatest Soviet writers, and was showered with all the benefits which go with it. He received a lot of money in royalties and in advances which publishing houses forced on him for his future books. He was given an automobile, an apartment in the writers' modem house, a summer home, and mountains of flattery and praise from people who had never heard of his existence before they read the Pravda article. Virta's head was turned and he became a victim of megalomania, which would be of no importance whatsoever, if this instance as well as several others like it had not completely killed the wish of any literary critic to express his trae views.

After that, who would dare to express an opinion? Before the Pravda had its say no other paper would publish a review. But Pravda reviewers are human too and they would not open their mouths without being sure that they were saying the right thing. It was often weeks after a new play, book, movie, or opera appeared before we read a review in the Pravda. The reason was simple: Leaders in the Kremlin do not always get around to reading a book or seeing a play immediately, so reviewers had to wait for a lead.

This blind submission to the tastes of higher circles was only strengthened during the purge. It had started before that. In the spring of 1934 the talented young Soviet composer Dimitri Shostakovich wrote an opera. Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk, which became the pride of Soviet music. The opera was shown to all prominent visiting foreigners and its score was sent out by the ofiSicial Soviet Literary Agency all over the world. In April, 1936, Stalin went to see the opera and this changed the entire trend of Soviet music. He did not like Shostako vich's music. Immediately after Stalin's visit to the opera an article, the gist of -which he dictated to the writer, David Zaslavsky, appeared in the Pravda calling Shostakovich's music a muddle which the masses could not understand. Soon afterwards Stalin again visited the opera, this time to see young Dzerzhinsky's Quiet Flows the Don, based on Sholokhov's novel, an unpretentious piece of music, devoid of any originality, full of sweet familiar folk tunes. This was the kind of music Stalin understood and liked, and which therefore had to be liked by everyone else. The Pravda glorified Dzerzhinsky's opera as a welcome contrast to the "bad" Shostakovich music. This greatly embarrassed serious Soviet music-lovers and Dzerzhinsky himself, who was a very young composer and an admirer of Shostakovitch. In 1938 Shostakovich was "rehabilitated." In the midst of the purges, he wrote his famous Fifth Symphony, which the critics hailed as a hymn to Soviet achievements. They only complained that in one movement Shostakovich remained true to his old self and permitted a melancholy note which conflicted -with "the joy of Soviet life."

I always admired the great film producer, Sergei Eisenstein. For several years in succession his films had been frowned on by the Kremlin, and I understood perfectly

well why he chose to make the patriotic film Alexander Nevsky in order to be sure of a success. Russian patriotism was the demand of the day. A tremendous press campaign had heralded in 1937 the new history textbook for schools which was to teach Soviet children a re-dsd history of Russia. Hitherto everything before 1917 had been black and anything after it ^ white. Now the Kremlin whitewashed what had pre-viously been considered czarist oppression and Russian imperialism.

Stalin himself took an active part in outlining the plan of the new history book. One paragraph of this plan which was printed with much ado dealt with the battle in 1225 on the frozen Peipus Lake between Russians and the German invaders. Karl Marx had written flattering words about the heroism of the Russians in this encounter, and Marx's words gave the cue to Eisenstein's film as well as to the numerous articles commenting on the film. The Soviet press, so limited in space, devoted much of it to arouse the readers' love for their wonderful ancestors who had bravely fought the Germans 713 years ago.

It was sad to see the spirit of the old rebel Eisenstein broken and to read his articles on Alexander Nevsky, the hero of the 1225 battle, written in the dry uninspired style of the daily Soviet press so far from Eisenstein's own sparkling individual style. The film was loudly heralded for weeks and months. When finally the great day came, I was deeply disappointed. Not an atom of Soviet patriotism or anti-Hiderism was aroused in me when I looked at Tisse's magnificent photography of the battle on the ice. The film seemed insincere and false to me and unworthy of Eisenstein's genius. I know that many felt the way I did. The press was boisterous but the public silent. I only gave vent to my feelings in a letter to Louis in carefully concealed words. In face of the ecstatic official tone it would have been blasphemy to say I disliked the fikn.

Alexander Afinogenov, whose play Listen, Professor! was recently produced on Broadway, was one of the most popular and probably the most gifted Soviet playwright. For many years he was a close friend of Yagoda, the GPU chief. Many writers envied him this friendship which brought him into high Soviet circles. Afinogenov might have derived some privileges from it but his literary success was certainly due to his ability as a writer. His plays were appreciated because, unlike many Soviet plays of that period, they had ideas which made people think. After Yagoda's fall and execution, Afinogenov fell into disfavor. He was attacked in the press and at meetings; he was expelled from the Communist party; his apartment was taken from him; he feared he was to be arrested.

His wife, an American bom in Florida, a former dancer, stood bravely by his side, and helped keep his spirit high. Every one of his plays, until then favorites all over the Soviet Union, were attacked and taken off the repertory. Plays which, when first produced, had had a glowing press, were now declared untalented, harmful, unworthy of a Soviet audience. Only his play on Spain escaped this fate—^this was due to the great sentiment in Russia for Spain, A talented writer, a fine human being was dragged into the mud by literary hacks who, only a few months earlier, would have

been honored by an invitation to Afimogenov's Moscow home or country house and who had formerly found only superlative words to praise his writings.

About a year after the campaign against him started, Afimogenov was reinstated in the party and his name cleared. I once asked him how his colleagues who outdid one another in covering him with dirt met him upon his restoration to favor. He said that some of them joyfully exclaimed:

"How nice that what we wrote about you proved to be untrue!"

(Afimogenov was killed in Moscow by a German bomb in the fall of 1941.)

The eagerness to throw mud at the past of everyone who became officially persona non grata was a most revolting phenomenon. In the spring of 1937 a letter appeared in the Pravda from a "woman patient" accusing the sixty-five-year-old famous physician Pletnev of having criminally attacked her two years earlier, of having bitten her breast and thereby inflicted a serious injury. I had an appointment with my dentist, a temperamental young woman, the morning this item appeared in the paper. She was almost hysterical with rage.

"Who wants to dig that old man's grave? It is hard enough to bite into a woman's breast "with your own teeth but with his set of false teeth the most he could do would be to bite into a tender piece of roast," she said.

It was clear that the whole thing was a fabrication. Why did the "woman patient" suddenly choose to tell the story two years after it had happened? The evening paper and the next morning's papers were full of quickly drafted resolutions, letters, and telegrams from medical societies, factories, high schools, art studios, collective farms, ballet schools, famous aviators, scientists, scrubwomen, actresses, etc. expressing their disgust, horror, indignation, and what not at Professor Pletnev's "brutal crime." No stone was heavy enough, no dirt filthy enough to throw at him by the magic of a few printed words in the Pravda. Not one voice was raised to defend his great medical achievements, which were also besmirched. The old man, Russia's greatest heart specialist, whose skill had saved thousands of lives, and the personal physician of many Soviet leaders, fought like a lion, which few did when officially attacked. He "succeeded"; he was found guilty and sentenced to two years' imprisonment, but because "he had realized the savagery of his crime," the sentence was conditional.

A few months later his name appeared again in the papers, this time in connection with the Bukharin-Rykov trial in March, 1938; he was accused of having killed Maxim Gorki and Politbureau member, Kuibyshev. Professor Pletnev received twenty-five years' imprisonment. At his age it meant good-bye to life.

Another physician. Dr. Levine, accused of the same crime at the same trial, was not as "lucky." He was sentenced to death. Levine, like Pletnev, was one of the most famous Soviet physicians. He had treated most Soviet leaders, including Lenin, and many foreigners. He was a highly cultured, refined old man, a great lover of art. At openings of art exhibits or first nights at the theater one could see the short, roundish doctor with his neatly trimmed Vandyke beard, and his wife, both smiling and bowing to their numerous friends. After he was shot, I often caught myself in a theater looking

for him or ready to smile at a white-haired, friendly man who looked like him. I also saw the faces of other executed or exiled friends. Even now, years later, I suddenly recognize a familiar face in a Times Square or subway crowd only to recall that he or she is long dead. It seems that my mind never accepted the deaths of people I liked and respected.

It probably would have been easier to accept and bear these deaths if I had believed that the executed were traitors and that their existence was an obstacle on the road to a happier world. I did not believe it and I did not understand why it was necessary to brand as enemies thousands and thousands of people who before the purge were considered the salt of the Soviet earth. I did not understand why these people accepted all the ugly accusations and confessed to crimes which the accusers themselves knew very well had never been committed. I did not understand how crimes, plots, attempts of murder, train wrecks, cattle poisoning, etc., allegedly committed over a period of almost two decades, were suddenly discovered at the wave of an invisible baton.

There were many things I did not understand. Among them was the influence Moscow exercised on foreign Communists and sympathizers. Their admiration for Soviet achievements was easy to understand. But their unquestioned mental subordination, their complete acceptance of Soviet ideas which started about 1930 remained a puzzle to me. Whatever slogan the Russian Communist party issued for purely internal purposes was promptly taken up and adopted by the German, English, and all other Communist parties. If Stalin thought the Russian Bolsheviks were not ruthless enough and accused them of "rotten liberalism," Communists abroad suddenly discovered "rotten liberals" lurking under their beds and fought them with exactly the same methods and words the Russians used. When Stalin fought the right opposition, the foreign Communist orchestra obediently chimed in. If his anger turned against the left, promptly that orchestra changed its tune.

When Stalin took over the leadership of the literary and artistic tastes of the Russians, foreign Communists were quick to accept his leadership in this field for themselves. When Stalin condemned "formalism," it became "Down with Formalism" in New Zealand and Chile. Stalin said, "Let there be socialistic realism in literature," whatever that meant, and nothing but socialistic realism would do for the Greenwich Village parlor Bolshevik or the Montparnasse poet.

In a speech in March, 1937, Stalin quoted something from Greek mythology. Soviet literati and historians got busy and prepared papers on Greek mythology for a special session of the Academy of Science. I translated a paper on "Greek Mythology and Hitler." The attitude of the Russians is unfortunate but understandable. It is hard to blame a man for trying to save his skin. But why did foreign Communists get excited over the Greek quotation?

In the winter of 1938, the Soviet government suddenly discovered the unsurpassed beauty and deep patriotism of *Slovo o Folku Igoreve*, a saga about Prince Igor, written 756 years earlier. It is written in the old Slavonic language. Many generations of Russian school children straggled to learn it by heart. Now it became, by order of the Kremlin,

the jewel of Russian literature. It appeared in many editions. Celebrations were held and exhibits opened in its honor. Through the Soviet Telegraphic Agency and the Moscow Daily News the glad news was sent to a world whose very foundation was then being rocked by events of historic importance. The Pravda and other Soviet newspapers relegated Hitler's march into Austria, the Spanish Civil war, and other such events into obscurity to devote whole pages to Prince Igor's love for Russia.

Despite the deafening campaign, few Russians shared the official enthusiasm for this rediscovered classic. The poem had existed for centuries. Lovers of old literature had always admired it and continued to do so despite the disturbing noise around it. Plain mortals benevolently loved it as they had before. But one evening in a friend's house, several foreign Communists expressed their deepest admiration for the poem as though it were the latest Soviet achievement. One of them, with a rapturous tremolo in his voice, recited the poem. He was full of indignation against the Russians present who did not share his entrancement and he was ready to call us Trotskyites and counter-revolutionists.

In our neighborhood, on the Arbat, was a house which the Soviet government had given to Polish political exiles, all of them zealous anti-Fascists. Many of them had spent years in Polish prisons famous for their cruel treatment of political prisoners. The Stahn purge gradually emptied the house and by the end of the purge there was hardly a Polish family left in it. Finnish, Hungarian, Bulgarian, Czech, German, and other Communists fared no better. Most of them had lived in the Lux, the famous residence of Comintern employees. One after another they were taken away during the night and the next day their families were ordered to move out of their rooms. The building was now divided into two parts. A newly built wall separated the back section, into which the families of the arrested were moved, from the front part where the others awaited their fate. There was no communicating door between them, and the inhabitants of the back were not permitted to enter the front door. Even the children were not permitted to play together or to march together in demonstrations.

The families of the arrested had no means of earning a livelihood. But nobody cared. They developed a splendid spirit of companionship. If one sold a typewriter, radio, suitcase, winter coat, fountain pen, watch, blanket, or wedding ring, the food was shared by all. But there were times without food. It was an open secret in Moscow that the wives of two arrested German Communists became prostitutes in order to feed their children. The case of the Bulgarian woman who was deported to Bulgaria despite the fact that her husband had been executed there several years earlier also broke through the wall of secrecy around the Hotel Lux. The Lux, once the proud headquarters of people who had given themselves entirely to one goal—communism—exposing themselves to danger, neglecting their families, and disregarding their personal welfare, was now the shelter of unhappy confused people. All foreign Communists residing in Moscow knew it and it certainly had reached their friends abroad, but never a hint of a protest was heard from them.

Foreign Communists in Moscow were witnesses that, while the cream of the world's fighting Communists were being killed and wounded on the Spanish battlefields, many others were bodily and spiritually destroyed in Russia. And still they "hailed" even more than the Russians did. The Moscow Daily News distinguished itself for that. We used to bet on the number of times "hail" would appear in their headlines. They hailed, for instance, with equal rapture hot lunches for Soviet school children and the abolition of same; the democratic relations in the Red Army and the introduction of distinctions in the Red Army; the introduction and abolition, reintroduction and reabolition of political commissars in the Red Army; free Soviet education and the introduction of tuition fees in Soviet schools; co-education and abolition of same. They hailed in almost identical expressions the rise and fall of the same leaders, books, or ideas. They hailed ecstatically every sign of rising Russian nationalism though it conflicted with Leninism and internationalism, which they also hailed. The foreign Communist press, of course, followed the Russian lead in all this, but they added to the official Soviet phraseology a tenacity and glow all their own which was even stronger than the Russian sample and most repulsive in its servility.

Chapter 22

In the end of May, 1938, Louis came from Spain for a short visit. He arrived by plane from Stockholm in noon and at four in the afternoon he was playing tennis. It was warm and sunny, the boys were happy to pick up their father's tennis balls, the tennis court was full of gay, young people dressed in white. Two Soviet glamorous girls, famous tennis champions, surrounded by a crowd of admirers, added to the smart, lighthearted picture. Everything seemed to be full of peace and joy. But a few hours later we started to discuss one of the most decisive steps in our life: Should the boys and I leave the Soviet Union for good and go to the United States? We talked and talked about it for days. We had lots of time. There were no friends to entertain, no visits to pay.

In the old days, when Louis came back from abroad, our apartment was like a madhouse for days. Friends came to greet Louis, to receive their ordered purchases or a gift, but mostly to hear about the outside world. This time, no more than three or four Soviet citizens showed up during Louis's entire visit. This, despite the tremendous interest of all Russians in Spain and world events at that time. The Russians were afraid to meet a foreign friend.

The decision to leave Russia was not an easy one for us to make. There were financial reasons for leaving. My chances for work were now almost nil. Few risked giving work to a foreigner's wife. Louis could send me no money because at the official rate of exchange it would be like throwing money out of the window. He definitely declared that under no circumstances would he return to Moscow to work. Cut off from all sources of information except the Soviet press, with old friends shot or exiled and no hope of making new ones, journalism for him had no more attraction in Russia.

Important as my financial considerations were, I might have found a way of overcoming the difficulty if they had been my only problem. Throughout my life I had often subordinated my modest material requirements to the demands of mind and spirit. And I would not have hesitated to expose my boys to hardships, as I had done in the past, had I believed that it was good for their souls.

My friends made it especially difficult to decide to leave. Few of them remained. But these few had grown deep into my heart and the thought of leaving them was agony. I knew that to some of them I was the sole moral support they had.

It pained me to see how little our boys used their brains and how shallow their minds had become. They accepted all slogans and formulas without ever questioning them. Yura was the editor of his school magazine. I used to type his articles. As much as I avoided any political discussions with him, I categorically refused to type at the end of the articles the words: "Thank you, Comrade Stalin, for our happy childhood!"

without which hardly an article in a youth magazine appeared in those days. I had seen too much suffering among guiltless children during the purge. So had Yura. If he had not lost the capacity of thinking, he would not have used these words. But he, as well as Vitya, drew no conclusions from the sad events which had crossed their paths. They were caught in a current. They were happy and continued to look into their future with complete serene confidence.

There was also the fear that our leaving might be used by Soviet enemies as an argument against the Soviet Union. I did not want that. The Soviet Union led then the anti-Fascist struggle in a world full of appeasers of Fascism. However strong were my objections to Stalin's dictatorship, my hatred of Fascism was stronger.

It was hard to leave a world where color and race did not make a person better or worse; where a manual laborer could be as important as a glamorous film star and as respected as a learned professor; where all children went to the same schools and had the same opportunities. It was hard to leave Russia, which I had seen transformed from a backward, unhappy, weak country into a new nation palpitating with life and powerful not only because it had a strong modern Red Army but because it had the enthusiastic, devoted, and loyal support of its population. I never questioned this devotion and support of the population. I was full of it myself. Yet I could not still my longing for personal freedom.

So the arguments flew back and forth, back and forth for many hours, with no decision taken. One day the boys came home from school all flushed with excitement. In both schools, in identical high-flown words, they had been told about the wonderful heroes Russia had in the past—Alexander Nevsky, Minin, Pozharsky, Kutuzov, Suvorov, etc.—and what wonderful freedom-loving patriots they were. Old czarist generals were presented to Soviet children as nineteenth-century anti-Fascist fighters. The latest Soviet tendency was to get out old, forgotten, historic figures, dust them off, dress them in shiny new clothes and Soviet terminology, and present them to the new generation as models of bravery and Russian patriotism. The old generation which, like myself, had gone through czarist schools, did not immediately fall for it. Even before the 1917 revolution these heroes had been called "hirelings of absolutism." Nor did the Bolsheviks consider them as national heroes until 1936.

To see my children, whom I had brought to the Soviet Union so that they might grow up in a country which was moving forward, to a freer happier life, away from the past—to see them full of adulation for persons whose names were symbolic of czarism was the last straw. I did not mind the children being made aware of the heritage of Russian culture. During the years when all friendly mention of pre-1917 Russia was considered to be hostile to the Soviet regime, I taught my children in secret to love Russian literature and the really great names of Russian past. But I strenuously objected to the dragging out of the historic corpses of czarist princes and generals to arouse Russian patriotism.

I felt very strongly on this point. There was enough confusion and insincerity already in what the boys were being taught, I did not want them to absorb more of it and to ruin their minds forever for clear honest thinking.

When the boys were telling us with exaltation what remarkable human beings Alexander Nevsky and Suvorov were, I did not say anything. I never [^]ed to say anything that contradicted what they were taught. If they had mentioned casually that their mother disagreed with them, it would have brought no end of trouble to all of us. Besides, I knew that any frank conversation would only confuse their minds. Years later in New York Yura told me that he and some of his friends even then did not blindly accept all they were told and that they sometimes aired their doubts and tried to find explanations. But none of them ever aired their doubts to an adult. We lived in close companionship and were fondly devoted but we kept our lips sealed and never dared to speak the doubts which tortured our minds. Ours was not the only family like that. Wherever there were people who kept their capacity to think and to criticize—[^]there were sealed lips and minds between husbands and wives, between parents and children, brothers and sisters, between closest friends. Dictatorship brings not only terror, executions, purges, etc. It kills family warmth and friendship. Freedom is more than the right to speak out. Freedom is friendship, truth, mental security, spiritual cleanliness. In the Soviet Union, people forgot to talk honestly; they soon were afraid to think honestly. They feared not only the GPU; they feared one another and themselves.

So I kept quiet and listened to the boys' raving about the old generals. But when they left the room, I told Louis that my mind was made up. We sat down to write a letter to the GPU chief, Yezhov, asking for a passport to leave the country. I did not do it with a light heart. And it was not the kind of decision which, once taken, relieves one's mind and stops disturbing it.

It was not an easy job to tell the boys of our decision. Vitya quietly asked us to let him stay in Moscow in a friend's house where he could sleep on a cot in the hall. Yura, in his more turbulent way, developed the most fantastic plans about taking care of himself while staying alone in Moscow. Vitya wanted to remain because he did not wish to be separated from his friends, Lotar and Koni. But he quickly reconciled himself to the idea and was soon looking forward eagerly to going to a country where he could buy all the electric implements, nails, wire, and all the other things he needed for his technical experiments and which were hard to find in Moscow. Besides, going to New York meant a reunion with an old dear friend with whom he had planned long ago to live on a farm. This dream came true. Both our families now have farms in Pennsylvania.

It was harder with Yura. He bucked and kicked like a young colt. He had friends he loved. He was popular at school and successful as the school newspaper editor. He had definite plans for college and work in the future. He did not want to leave it. Youth in Russia is so indoctrinated with the idea that the outside world is no good that they lack the most wonderful of all things—an adventurous desire to explore the world. I am glad Yura has since regained it.

Louis returned to Paris and Spain. While waiting for my passport to leave, I went with the boys to the Friedrich Wolf summer dacha, in the Writers' Settlement, in the midst of pine woods about an hour from Moscow. Several adults and five or six boys occupied the twostory bungalow. It was crowded, but lively and friendly. Frequently the boys joined other volley-ball players at Alexander Afinogenov's dacha. Writers, stage and movie people competed with the children in having an excellent time while avoiding all unpleasant topics of political conversation.

Several dachas in the Writers' Settlement changed hands when the old owners were arrested. This scarcely affected the lives of the others. The writers tended their large and beautiful gardens. They competed in raising tomatoes, strawberries, and flowers. They gave elaborate parties in houses which were so big that one writer assured his friends he learned to drive his car in his living room. Pasternak, Fedin, Leonov, Babel, Tchukovsky, Pavlenko, Vsevolod Ivanov, and others, the flower of Soviet literature, seemed to make the most of the beautiful surroundings which the Soviet government had created for them.

These writers, as well as all of us who lived together on our dacha, had close friends who had disappeared or been otherwise disturbed by the purge. But life marches on. While sun-bathing, swimming, playing games, strolling through the woods for mushrooms and berries, all of us enjoyed a bit of gossip and a good laugh as in the old days. Sometimes a new visitor from town would be a person hard hit by the purge and very miserable. But after a report of the latest events in his or her troubled life, the visitor would usually join us in the highhearted pleasures of Russian dacha life. Human nature, which can endure much more than one thinks, tends rather toward light than darkness. Even the most unhappy Russians, moreover, did not feel that life had turned back completely or stopped forever. Soviet Russians do not concentrate entirely on their personal problems, joys, and difficulties. Whatever happens, they think of it in terms broader than their own life. The purge was cruel, the tragedies it brought were numerous and unnecessary. But that was not the end of the Soviet Union. There was no general feeling of hopelessness and misery.

When we returned to Moscow in the fall, I again felt that life marches on no matter what happens. There was plenty of anguish and worries. But it was as hard as ever to get a theater ticket, and the movie lines seemed to grow longer every day. Restaurants and cafes were crowded at all hours. My small group of friends remained faithful to the Cafe National. The National afternoon crowd included writers, movie stars, actors, musicians. Some of the old habitués were missing. Gone was the literary critic, Dmitri Mirsky, a former count, who always used to sit at the same corner table, his pale face immovable, his long fingers nervously twisting his black beard. Gone was the lively movie reporter, Boris Zeitlin, who had made the unforgettable documentary film on the war in Abyssinia. A wild rider, sniper, flier, and juggler, he had once so impressed Haile Selassie, as he later did our boys, with his sleight-of-hand tricks that on Zeitlin's next visit the emperor ordered all important papers in the palace in Addis Ababa put under guard against the Russian wizard. Many others had disappeared too. But those

who remained to visit the cafe were as loud and lively as before. They were only more careful in their associations.

In the evenings after nine it was impossible to find a table in the National and hard to see anything through the dense clouds of smoke. In the old days we had known many people in the National but now there were few familiar faces. The crowd was younger, louder, and bent on dancing, laughing, and otherwise enjoying themselves. They looked unperturbed and pleased with life.

Durmg the summer and fall of 1938, from time to time, I went to the AOMS, the Passport and Visa Department, to inquire about my passport. The Foreign Office had asked AOMS to take special care of my case and the AOMS chief thought it his duty to receive me whenever

I came to inquire. He offered me cigarettes, we discussed the weather and movies. He would give me a pep talk and occasionally' mention that the Soviet llunion was not such a bad place to live in. Several months passed with no reply to my application for a passport handed in in June. In November, during one of his friendly talks with me, the AOMS chief asked me why, instead of my going with the boys to join Louis, Louis didn't come back to Moscow and write here as he had before. I said that Louis preferred to write on Spain. A few days later, I was officially refused permission to leave the Soviet llunion.

The shock was terrific. It was not only the separation from Louis and the breaking up of the family. The thought of remaining in Russia against my will, after the authorities had clearly shown that I was persona, non grata, was more than I could bear at this moment. When I left the building, the world looked hopelessly dark. A heavy truck dashed by and teased me with the easy possibility of putting a quick end to all troubles. At this moment Vitya, who had accompanied me, touched my arm and brought me back to my senses by saying it his quiet, gentie way:

“The circus is just around the comer, let's get ticket for tonight.”

So we did and in the evening I accompanied the boys and their friends to the circus, which they greatly enjoyed. But I was deeply disturbed and I let Louis understand the seriousness of the situation in a carefully disguised telegram.

Chapter 23

New YEAR'S EVE, 1939. I Spent it all alone near the radio in a room lighted only by the silvery New Year's tree. Yura had his first grown-up party and dashed off in a flurry of excitement. Niura also had a party, which made her very proud. One of her boy friends invited her to the house of his father, a factory director, where a selected group of his father's friends celebrated. I helped her dress and she too rushed off, flushed and excited. Vitya and Lotar had left earlier in the day to go to the Wolf dacha where they were to go on a skiing tour with other boys through the hills at midnight.

Throughout my whole life New Year's night had always been important to me. It meant striking the balance of the past and prying into the future. So it was in this night. I was sad but I could not help laughing at the thoroughly funny New Year's radio program presented by prominent Soviet comedians. I relived in my mind the last two New Year's Eves.

Two years ago—1937—Louis had suddenly arrived from Spain for a few days. Before we knew he was coming, we had made preparations for a children's New Year party. I could not change that. We had few adults but a lot of children. Louis told them stories about Spain. We played a practical joke on the children. Using an old telegram Louis had sent me from Madrid, we typed on it in Spanish a telegram from Alvarez del Vayo with greetings from Spanish children to Soviet children.

The effect was tremendous. Vohk's eyes shone like candles. Yura kept on repeating: "From Spanish children, from Spanish children." Shuni, a beautiful darkhaired girl, asked importantly for a copy for her pioneer magazine. A blonde pig-tailed little girl suggested that the whole group reading the telegram should be photographed for her school magazine. The telegram was lying on the table and from time to time one of the children would touch it and smile. Before they went home, we had to tell them the truth. Otherwise the news of it would have spread all over Moscow. The unhappy faces of the children were a lesson to us to show better taste in the future in playing practical jokes. On the whole it was a cosy warm celebration, a bit sad, though, because Louis was leaving the next day.

On the eve of 1938 the clouds were dark and my mind was far from a celebration. But I lit the tree and invited our remaining few friends and the boys' friends. Yura was often pensive throughout the evening. Volik was not with him. Lotar's father as well as the fathers of two other little visitors were in prison. Adele was gone and so were others with whom we used to celebrate New Year's Eve. But we still had a small group around us and we tried to be as cheerful as we could. It was not easy for me. Niura,

before leaving for her own celebration, whispered into my ear that she had just heard from her friend who lived in Mironov's house that both our dear friends, Mironov and his wife, had been shot. False rtihior ot trllCi

I felt as if a cold hand clutched at my heart and would not let it go. I did not want to spoil the evening and kept the pain to myself.

Now, 1939: Here I sat all alone with thoughts lost in the past, I who always preferred to look into the future. At midnight the phone rang. R, from the Izvestia staff, wished me a happy New Year and asked;

“Remember three years ago?”

Did I remember? I was with a large party in the Metropole then. R was with a group of newspaper people at the table next to ours. Back and forth, between the two tables, confetti, balloons, and jokes flew. At midnight R and Mironov walked over to me, wished me happiness, and drank Louis's health. Louis was in the States then. Late that night I went from the big Metropole ballroom up two flights to Erwin Piscator's room where a jolly German-American-Russian party was in full swing. At 5 A.M.; I continued to celebrate in my own apartment where a friend, to whom I had turned over my place for the night, was giving her party.

Did I remember that night? We were drunk not Avith wine alone. Bright hope and the fullness of life are no less intoxicating. And now R, the witty conversationalist, whose house was always open to crowds of interesting people, sat at home alone on New Year's night. He alone remained free of all the people with whom he had celebrated the advent of 1936. He called himself “the forgotten man.”

“My being free is merely an oversight on the part of the GPll,” he once said. “They simply forgot to arrest me. Now most of the GPll men who arrested my friends have themselves been, arrested. The new ones have never heard my name. Those who remember me are sure that I was arrested long ago.”

He was alone in a world which he had helped to build and which was his own only a short while ago.

At 12:30 a cable came from Louis. “Happy New Year. Hope we all spend next year together abroad.” This was hardly the proper cable to send to a Soviet citizen in 1939. It was intended to make the censor angry, and it was intended to give me a ray of hope.

Suppose the hope was fulfilled and I should be permitted to leave the Soviet Union? That would not change the fact that the hopes -with which I came to Russia twelve years ago had been shattered. Once more I tried to rekindle the fire of the past. I thought of a high-school graduation ball I attended a few years ago. How happy, care-free, and sure of their future these youngsters were. So were millions of other Soviet youngsters. So were my own children. But suppose a parent is arrested? The happy childhood is destroyed.

I listened to the singing on the snowy street below my window and tried to let it warm my heart. The young people who sang were truly happy. But instead I saw the staggering figure and emaciated face of exPremier Rykov's wife as she once passed me

in the street. I saw the insane eyes of a young girl walking up and down on the Stone Bridge, muttering aloud and clutching a pile of worn-out newspapers to her breast. The newspapers bore the headline: "Death to the Traitors!"

I tried to think of what had given me so much joy in the past: the trust and warmth of the people; the fine spirit in which they took their hardships and worries; their courage, their good-natured jokes about queues, dirt, crowded homes. But only the day before at the

Press Department, where in the old days so many of these jokes originated, when I mentioned that I was late because I had had to stand in line for two hours for a cabbage, the censor looked at me in stern reproval:

"A line to buy a cabbage? That can't be. You must be dreaming," he firmly but untruthfully assured me. Coldness and lies where there had been warmth and truth.

I turned to my great love and constant source of joy in Russia: the theater. But it was no longer a theater of searchings, of daring failures and triumphant victories. It consisted of old classics or guardedly written modern plays. Lately, several plays on Lenin had made their debut. They glorified Stalin. In all of them, contrary to all human sense and historic truth, Lenin, before making a decision or answering a question, turned to Stalin, who would part with his pipe for a moment to tell Lenin what to do.

I clung desperately to every bit of light I could think of. Below the window it was hvely. There was singing and laughter. But it was lonely and quiet in my room which had witnessed so much gaiety and joy in the past. I was thinking of R who was also lonely and sad. We did not have the consolation which older generations usually have: of being pushed aside by impetuous youth which wants to walk to the goal with quicker steps than older people are able to take. We wanted all the things which the crowds below my window wanted and we were ready to take even quicker steps. But we wanted one thing more: freedom to think and to speak honestly.

Often during the weeks after I was refused permission to leave the Soviet Union I tried to map out a perfectly new future for myself: I would divorce Louis, break all connections with my mother, sister, and friends abroad. I would never again read a foreign book or newspaper, listen to a foreign broadcast, or speak a foreign language. I would put blinders on my mind and my heart. I would accept the Pravda as my gospel, and hate and love whatever and whomever the Pravda ordered me to love or to hate every morning. And who knows, maybe some day I would stop complaining and be content to go to sleep in peace with myself and the world. After all, don't people elsewhere have to shut up their hearts and minds if they want to go to sleep in peace? They must not hear hungry children cry a stone's throw from their houses and must not mind when a family in the next house opens the gas jets.

My thoughts went back to years gone by: I witnessed the years of supreme sacrifice. I experienced the short period when the goal seemed so near that its breath made life sparkling and bright. As years went by, there was less and less need of restrictions, bridles, and terror. A new Soviet generation had emerged, so loyal and patriotic that,

let free, the entire country could have done nothing else but march on and on to the beckoning haven. This march actually started in 1936.

I saw a vision of this march, a march of tens of millions to freedom and happiness. Suddenly, in the middle of the triumphant exultant march, thousands upon thousands of leaders, and friends and families of the leaders, are done away with, killed or imprisoned or thrown to the winds. The ranks are confused. A few raise their voices in protest. The fate of their fallen leaders immediately overtakes them too. The protests grow dimmer and dimmer, the orders to march on grow louder. The march forward continues. New leaders take the place of the old. The ranks, loyal and enthusiastic, close again. A few march on with bleeding hearts. On the road are left behind free thought and human rights, truth and openmindedness. I cannot live without these, and the march continues without me. The marchers are young and vigorous and enthusiastic but I hope that some day they will realize that their lives would be richer if they added to it what they left behind.

The lonely hours on New Year's night made me see things more clearly and sharply than ever before. There was no more wavering in me. The perfect future I had mapped out for myself in Russia was no more than a myth I created as a justification to go on living. I wanted to get out and live freely and -without fear. I wanted to sleep without the nightmare of heavy steps behind my door. I wanted my children to open their minds again. I wanted to recover my human dignity again. I wanted to get out of Soviet Russia. I sent Louis a desperate SOS.

Chapter 24

Less than two weeks later I received a special-delivery notice from AOMS asking me to come there, and a telephone call from Gnedin, the head of the Foreign Office Press Department, to come to see him. Why had I suddenly become so popular? I first went to see the AOMS chief.

“Do you still want to go abroad? ”

“I certainly do,” I replied.

I felt extremely determined since that New Year’s night.

“Your petition has been re-examined and acted upon favorably.”

Seven and a half months after I had handed it in and several weeks after a refusal! My heart thumped, my head swam, but I concealed my excitement and asked coolly:

“All right, when can I get my passport?”

He promised it for the next morning.

Gnedin received me with a wide smile and congratulated me. I asked him the reason for the sudden decision. He smiled enigmatically:

“I am sure Louis will tell you.”

Three weeks later in London I found out that the miracle had been worked through important wire-pulling in Washington.

Yura was so persistent in his refusal to leave in the middle of his school year that I consulted Gnedin on the possibility of leaving him behind. Gnedin, besides being a friendly, intelligent official, was a good father. His daughter had attended kindergarten with our boys and since those days we had often discussed pedagogical problems. Gnedin definitely advised me against Yura’s staying alone in Moscow. In Yura’s presence he promised that if, after a few months abroad, he decided to come back, his old room would be returned to him. Mrs. Robert Magidov, wife of the NBC correspondent, who took over our apartment, promised it too.

The Foreign Office kindly helped me through the endless red tape and innumerable details connected with a departure from the Soviet Union. I experienced endless difficulties with the visas. Our boys are American citizens because their father is a native-born American. American citizens do not need United States visas to enter the U.S.A. So the State Department sent a United States visa only for me. But the Soviet government considered the boys Soviet citizens and issued a Soviet passport for the three of us. On that passport, there was only my United States visa and no United States visa for the boys. We had to get transit visas to travel through Finland, Sweden, Denmark, and England. The British, Danish, Swedish, and Finnish consulates, however, issue their

visas only on passports which have visas to the place of destination. So they refused to give transit visas on a passport for three which had an American visa only for one.

What could I do? The United States embassy was ready to give the boys American passports in Moscow but since they were considered Soviet citizens, I was afraid to let them travel in Russia as Americans. For days we were unable to get out of the vicious circle. Finally, the United States embassy asked the Finnish legation to make an exception in our case and grant all three of us a visa to Helsinki, which was done. The American consul there received instructions to give the boys their American passports and help us with all the transit visas.

I had to hand in my passport at the Finnish legation in Moscow and call next day for the visa. When I was leaving the legation, a man stopped me. He was a plainclothes GPU agent. What was I doing in the legation, he asked me. He demanded to see my papers. I had none. I had handed in all my many Soviet papers in return for the silk-covered red passport, now lying on a desk in the Finnish legation. The man put me under arrest until he could check the truth of my answers. He was going to phone his superiors. There was no telephone near by. When he finally found a pay station he had no ten-kopek coin for it and there was no one to change his three-rouble bill. I offered him ten kopeks; he indignantly rejected them. So we walked on, side by side, in complete silence, he obviously embarrassed, I perfectly at ease. I did not feel arrested at all, and for once in my life I was not a bit afraid of the GPU. Finally, he succeeded in finding his three roubles and found a pay station. A new, embarrassing problem arose. He did not want to lose me from his sight but at the same time he did not want me too near, lest I overhear the conversation. We finally settled on a spot which was neither too far nor too near, where he could see me and I could not hear him. He came out of the booth all flushed and told me that I was free to go.

This silly episode is of course far from being a typical arrest. Neither are GPU men as a rule fools nor is an arrest a picnic. Next day, when I had to call at the Finnish legation for my passport, I asked a friend to go with me in a taxi. But nothing happened this time.

I never thought I had many earthly possessions. But when it came to breaking up the household, I discovered that I had loads of things. I sold a few, since I needed money for the trip. But there were many more to dispose of. For days I did nothing but pack suitcases to distribute among friends. Things which I would have donated in New York to the Salvation Army brought joy to people who were among the highest-paid groups in Moscow. The wife of a well-known lawyer was happy to get a pair of Louis's old flannel pajamas. The coat was to be made into a blouse for her and the pants would be converted into tennis trousers for the famous orator.

An actress was tickled to get my window curtains, which she was going to use for a summer dress. They were of a flimsy oft-washed material which the wife of Kendall Foss, the American foreign correspondent, had given me in 1932 when, before leaving the Soviet Union, she was distributing her belongings among friends.

Smartly dressed women whom I hardly knew, when they heard of my leaving, overcame their fears and descended on the dangerous abode of a foreigner's family to beg for a pair of stockings, an old pair of shoes, gloves, curlers, handkerchiefs, a zipper. Knowing how much these trifles meant to them it was hard to refuse. But my faithful friends and Niura were to receive the bulk of my possessions. The problem was how to get the things to my friends. One or two of them did not mind, but most of them would rather do without the tempting treasures than be seen walking out of my house carrying a bundle or a suitcase, or have one of us enter their house with it. But my family had not been detective story fans in vain. We used the old trick of disposing of dangerous burdens: We resorted to the railroad station checkrooms as intermediary.

My biggest job was our books. We had collected hundreds of them. I was erroneously told by the Foreign Office that I would have trouble taking trunkfuls of books into the United States. A friend was ready to keep my books in her attic. But I had to promise her to eliminate everything "incriminating." Innumerable volumes were therefore burned. Not only the works of Trotsky, Radek, Bukharin, and other "heretics" were taboo, but also the most innocent novel or travel book which contained a foreword, picture, or mere mention of one of the many prominent people who had fallen in disfavor now. Burning books was quite a usual procedure in Moscow and it was easy to find an apartment in the neighborhood which had a large old-fashioned stove where I could perform the ghastly task. Books collected by us for many years went into that stove. The worst thing of all was to see the flames devour Grigori Belenki's beautiful albums and books which had been given to us with friendly autographs by their authors.

Next came another strenuous task. There were trunks, boxes, and drawers full of Louis's archives including his letters to me. Half of his papers, the most precious and interesting ones, had to be burned: They covered the period before 1936 and were full of unmentionable names. It was not easy to destroy them but there was no place I could leave them. It is a loss which Louis will always regret.

The sorting of Louis's letters to me was facilitated by my long experience in crossword and jigsaw puzzles. Before me I had a chaotic pile of letters written over a period of fifteen years marked: "Monday," "Tuesday," or "July 11th," "Dec. 20th," or "On Board Ship." After I succeeded in putting them in chronological order, they gave a pretty correct picture of Louis's reaction to Russia. His letters before 1936 were full of eagerness to return to Moscow, to friends, to conversations, travels, to the buoyancy of Moscow's life compared to which all other cities seemed tame. After 1936 there were no friends, no conversations, no travels, no buoyancy to look forward to. All this was in Spain now. Louis's letters contained one wish: that Spain would win and help win the first pitched battle against Fascism.

After papers and letters were taken care of, came photographs. Many of these had to be sacrificed to the flames too. Photos from the conferences at which I worked, of Foreign Office friends, of important and unimportant people had to be destroyed. Family photos were all painstakingly examined by GPK officials before permission was

given to take them out of the country. Every slip of paper, even the boys' schoolbooks, went through the same official scrutiny.

The boys could not possibly show themselves abroad in the worn-out Soviet clothes they were wearing. The whole family and some of our friends were mobilized to search the stores, but the most extensive hunt did not uncover a suit or a pair of trousers in the whole city. The new shortage in consumers' goods which started with the purge had assumed considerable dimensions in

1939- Two of our young friends, who had received new suits from Paris, parted with these most valuable possessions out of friendship for our boys. Their mother permitted them to do it not only out of friendship for us. She was mainly prompted by a feeling of Soviet pride. She did not want the boys to look poor arriving in Finland.

Finally, all was ready for the trip abroad. February 10, 1939, the day of departure, arrived. Lotar and Koni spent the last twenty-four hours in our house. They and Vitya, young in years but experienced in sad partings, cherished every moment they still had together. Yura went away in the morning and came home in the evening shortly before train time. He had already said his farewells to his friends. All that last day he spent walking through Moscow memorizing the places he knew and loved. He visited his favorite subway stations. A few years earlier, when the future magnificent subway was nothing but dug-up pavements and piles of stones in the streets, our boys had often stopped on their way home from school and with other school children put in a few hours of real hard labor helping to dig and carry stones. With millions of other Moscovites they watched with joy and pride the building of the subway, and on the day of the official opening of the subway they stood for hours in a huge crowd waiting for their turn- to take a ride. For days afterwards they took daily subway rides until they were familiar with the smallest details of every one of the stations. Each station was different and each had its fans, who differed with one another no less fiercely than American baseball fans. Yura was deeply hurt when he once heard an American friend say that overornate lighting devices, marble statues, and modernistic paintings don't belong in subway stations.

On his last day Yura also visited the new houses erected in our neighborhood during the years we lived there. Like other Moscow children, he had watched the building of every one of them with the interest of an owner. Every improvement in the neighborhood, every newly paved street, every newly painted house, every new store, every courtyard transformed into a garden filled the children with pride. It was much more than the local patriotism of a neighborhood. These children grew up without knowing the word "landlord." Soviet youngsters are brought up to feel that everything around them is their property and their responsibility. A new house in the neighborhood, they felt, adds to their own welfare.

Yura walked over the Moscow River bridges which he loved and along the river where they swam in the summer and where they skied and skated in the winter. He went to look at our old apartments. But mostly he just walked and walked through the streets.

I had a few calls to pay. Some friends were afraid to come to the house or to the railway station. But the number of people who did come to say good-bye and take me to the station made me happy. And so great was my desire not to go away in bitterness that the fact that, when the time came to go to the station, I was able to get three taxis to come on a phone call, filled me with joy. This had been impossible in the past when going to a station was always agony for fear of being late. Now the three taxis came promptly to the door and I felt pleased. We found more friends at the station. It was an act of courage for Russians in 1939 to see someone off who was leaving the country for good, and I appreciated it. The farewells were painful but brave.

After a day in Leningrad where we did a lot of sight[248] seeing and caviar-eating we reached the Finnish border. Our last hour on Soviet soil was spent in the waiting hall of the border station. The only other passenger was a forlorn Soviet engineer who was going to the United States. The friendly waitress played our favorite Russian songs for us on the victrola. She sat with us while we ate our supper. Her warm heart and simple mind guessed the nostalgia with which we were leaving. She took us to the train, shook hands with the boys, embraced me, and stood waving for a long time. This was the last we saw of the Soviet Union.

Chapter 25

Next day we were in Finland, which our boys had been taught to despise as a semi-Fascist capitalist country. Their first impression of Helsinki embarrassed them. They expected revolting luxury next to destitute slums, ragged paupers at street corners stretching out emaciated hands to richly dressed overfed bourgeois who ignore them. Instead, they found a clean pleasant city with people sensibly and warmly dressed in the residential as well as in the workers' sections. In these workers' districts they saw new workers' houses, clean friendly co-operative stores, and hundreds of children and adults gaily skating in colorful sport clothes. The three of us had to be completely outfitted, and everywhere in the stores the boys admired the friendliness and politeness with which the salespeople treated all customers, whether workingmen or bourgeois. The boys marveled at the quiet, smooth efficiency with which life functioned. Their initial resistance quickly broke down and Yura soon declared that he was in love with Helsinki. He couldn't concede everything, however, and when he saw a few youngsters gaily delivering grocery goods on their bicycles during school hours, he made a little speech on were both perfectly happy, and they thoroughly enjoyed the comfortable hotel room, the healthy food, the pretty souvenir shops where they bought flashlights, Finnish knives, leather notebooks, and other luxuries. From Helsinki, we traveled to Stockholm, Copenhagen, and Harwich, the British port, where we were met by Louis, who had just arrived from New York. The four of us traveled down to London together.

Two days after we arrived in London, on a Saturday night, we had an appointment with Louis in the lobby of a Piccadilly hotel. Inside the hotel we saw rich old painted ladies and little page boys in their resplendent uniforms; outside, a group of jobless singing Welsh miners collecting money, a blind war invalid, and a ghostly-pale beggar. Yura was miserable. He turned to me full of disgust:

"I am going back to Moscow. I hate this life. There is nothing here I could ever like," he exclaimed.

But next day he found something he liked. A young veteran from the International Brigade took the boys to a demonstration for Spain on Trafalgar Square. They came home in high spirits very different from those of the night before. They did not know English and did not understand the speeches. But they did understand when the crowd shouted, "Down with Chamberlain," and they were deeply impressed by the fact that the police stood by and did not interfere with the crowd, not even when the demonstrators marched to 10 Downing Street to repeat their shouting at Prime Minister Chamberlain's doorstep.

“No one was arrested,” the boys excitedly told us. This was their first encounter with the workings of democracy and they loved it. But they did not cast offE their suspicions immediately.

They would say “sh-sh-sh” when a waiter approached our restaurant table while we talked polttics. Once we had a lively political discussion with friends in our hotel room; Yura in a whisper advised us to move away from the telephone; we used tp do that in Moscow.

Louis found this “stupid.” Even he, who had seen in Russia the sad effects of regimented thinking, did not realize the extent to which their brains were atrophied. The boys were not stupid; they had to adjust to a world where they had to decide for themselves, instead of being told by the morning paper what to think and what to say.

In New York the boys became George and Victor, went to school and, contrary to what they expected, found the “bourgeois” school quite free and democratic, and liked it very much. They paid prolonged visits to the five-and-ten-cent stores and gazed in admiration at the marvels on display. So did I. The three of us became passionate movie fans and in the beginning preferred thrillers to anything else. Many years of craving for adventure and mystery had to be satisfied.

But Yura’s homesickness for friends and familiar surroundings did not subside for some time and the first few months he continued to talk about going back to Moscow. I understood him well. I too had difficulty forgetting my old friends and adjusting myself to the new life. It was hard to get used to complicated social ways after the simplicity of Russian relationships. It was hard to follow again my reactions without constantly asking myself whether they would be officially approved. It was quite a while before I could again permit myself judgment about a book, movie, or person based exclusively on my own feelings and opinions. I knew that I was cured the day I was able to laugh over the embarrassment of a Communist girl who found out that the official party line rejected the film, *Gone With the Wind*, after she had raved about it in public. Not so very long ago I hardly would have laughed about it.

After years of guarded words and behavior outside of one’s intimate circle, it was hard suddenly to talk freely in circles of New Yorkers, especially if talking freely inevitably put me in the wrong with those to whom I talked. People who were levelheaded and tolerant on any other question became impassioned and intolerant when the Soviet llion was discussed.

Soviet sympathizers strongly disapproved of me for having left Russia. I should have stayed there with the boys, they intimated, as a living proof that life in the Soviet llion was much more wonderful than in the llited States. Coming from people comfortably settled with their families in New York who had either run away from Moscow’s discomforts or visited Russia on a glamorous lightning tour or never visited it at all, this was quite irritating.

It was also irritating that those among them who in the past had accepted as holy truth every word Louis and I had said in favor of the Soviet llion now disbelieved every word I said. They attacked me for the slightest hint of criticism, though many

of them knew me well as a truthful person and were sure that what I said was true. A young girl once burst into tears when I told her what happened to her friends in the Moscow purge. She believed me at that moment. But next day she called me a traitor and never spoke to me again.

Soviet enemies disapproved of me for having stayed so long in the Soviet Union and for refusing to agree with them that there was nothing but black in Russia. They attacked me for the slightest hint of a favorable opinion. They urged me to come out into the open and attack Russia. I could not do that.

Dark clouds were gathering over Europe. This time they looked real. If war came I had no doubt about the Soviet Union's stand: at the side of those who fought Fascism. And since this was decidedly my war, the longexpected fight against Hitler, it seemed treason to come out against the Soviet Union, the country which had advocated the anti-Nazi struggle for years.

When I heard the news of the Soviet-Nazi pact on August 23, 1939, over the radio, therefore, a hammer blow on my head would have been more merciful. An image which had pursued me since childhood flashed through my mind. Whenever I was unhappy, I saw a willow tree bending very low to the ground. I listened carefully: Is it going to break? No, it always straightened out again. Now I saw the willow bend lower than ever and I distinctly heard it break. Faces and words kept chasing one another before my eyes and wailing in unison: "It was all in vain!" All the sufferings, despair, humiliations, sacrifices, all were in vain. A phase of my life, the most important one, was finished. My scale lost its heaviest weight—the fight against Fascism—and with a crash tipped over.

Nothing anyone has said since in defense of this atrocious pact can convince me that it was necessary or that there was no other way to act at that time but to tell Hitler that he was going to have no second front if he started a war. And this after a decade of intensive Soviet preparation for war, when all the hardships of the

Five Year Plans, all the shortages and difficulties were explained by the need of being ready for war at any moment. For years we had been assured that the Soviet Union was strong enough never to permit a foreign soldier to step on her soil.

Nothing on earth could convince me that it was necessary for Moscow to destroy the united front against Fascism and give orders to the foreign Communist parties to cease their anti-Fascist struggle and to sabotage the war effort in their countries. Least of all could the American Communists convince me. To see them, at the command of Moscow, instantly throw overboard their united-front vocabulary—democracy, anti-Fascism, freedom, etc.—to remove Roosevelt's pictures from their walls, to discontinue the singing of the American national anthem at their meetings, and to start attacking democracy instead of Fascism in their press was a most repulsive spectacle. I lost all respect and trust in their deeds and words.

The blow of the Soviet-Nazi pact was a hard one. I was in Moscow during the 1938 Munich days. Then it looked for a short moment as if the democracies might fight Hitler over Czechoslovakia and that Russia would join them. There was a tremendous

upsurge of patriotism in Russia. Every Soviet adult and child was as ready to fight for Czechoslovakia as they would have been ready to fight for Spain. Was it because they so loved the Czechs or the Spaniards? No. It was only because the fight was against Russia's arch-enemy, Fascism. The Soviet government encouraged these feelings and, but for the betrayal of Munich, was ready to join forces with Daladier's reactionary government and Chamberlain's conservative government. Why was August, 1939, different? The countries responsible for Munich were going to fight Hitler—exactly what the Soviet government reproached them for not doing in September, 1938.

The Soviet-Nazi pact set me completely free. Life inside Russia after 1936 had crushed my illusions. The purges, the rise of Russian nationalism, Stalin's personal dictatorship, and the destruction of truth in the Soviet Union had made me bitter and eager to leave the country. But Moscow's anti-Fascist attitude kept alive my friendship for the Soviets. Besides, there was always my love of Russia. But now Stalin was helping Hitler. That was too much for me to bear. Now I had not the slightest moral obligation to defend the Soviet Union if it did wrong.

The Soviet-Nazi pact was also a great shock to our boys for they were brought up in the Soviet Union with a fierce hatred of Nazi Germany and of all that Fascism stood for. From that day on I heard no more talk from them about going back. They had some difficulties to overcome before they took firm root and began to feel perfectly at home in America. In the beginning it was not only their lack of English which made it hard for them to find a common language with their new schoolmates. It was not just words they had to learn. They had to absorb a new world of which they had known nothing before. In this new world it was just as important to know what George Washington, Lincoln, and Jefferson stood for as it was to be well informed about the Dodgers and the Giants. They had to learn about the House and the Senate; about the Democrats and Republicans; Election Day and Memorial Day and Columbus Day; the Ku-Klux-Klan and lynching; the southern Negro and the Irish Catholics. It was just as essential for them to know about Charlie McCarthy and Bob Hope, about Frankenstein and Edward G. Robinson; the Quiz Kids and Information Please; Scorchy Smith and Superman; Bing Crosby and Harry James; Ann Sheridan and Deanna Durbin; popcorn, cokes, and potato chips, and many many more things the existence of which they had never suspected while they lived in the Soviet Union.

They learned quickly. Much was strange to them. Once, reading a gossip column in a newspaper, Vitya asked me:

“Don't you think it is terrible for a wife or husband or children to read all this nasty gossip about people they love?”

In Russia they had never heard anyone's intimate personal affairs discussed in public and certainly not in a newspaper or over the radio. They were deeply shocked by the discrimination they found against Jews, Negroes, and other minority groups. They were never reconciled to this. They had to overcome the idea they brought from Russia that all rich people were; bad.

From the moment Vitya set foot on American soil he was overwhelmed by the technical marvels he found. He spent his first summer with friends on an upstate New York farm. There he achieved an old dream—he learned to drive a car. Two years later he scraped together enough from his modest monthly allowance and from the little he earned at an after-school job in the Slavonic room of the 42nd Street Public Library to buy himself an old Ford. He thus became the first and sole car-owner in the Fischer family.

Yura, who had been one of the best debaters and orators in his Moscow school, was in the beginning at a loss when arguing with his new American friends.

His arsenal of ready-made phrases was no match for youngsters who were used to thinking for themselves and were quick on the mental trigger. It took him a little while, but he, as well as Vitya, learned new ways. They learned in their New York schools, as well as later in the University of Wisconsin and still later in the United States Army that many American youths who did not use a lot of political terminology were just as interested as they were in social problems and in building a better world. They made many friends and learned to enjoy the pleasant camaraderie these friendships gave them. They learned to know and to love America. Their hatred of Fascism was always strong and they considered this war their war long before Pearl Harbor. They both enlisted in the United States Army.

Chapter 26

For weeks after the war began in the fall of '41, I would wake up in the middle of the night hoping that it was all a horrible nightmare: that there was no war; that Stalin had never smiled at Ribbentrop; that Molotov had not assured Hitler of the strength of the blood ties between Germany and Russia; that the Red Army stood at the Polish border as an eternal warning to Hitler; that the Soviet Union's place was with those fighting Hitler and not against them. The words Stalin spoke in 1936 hammered in my head again and again, words quoted millions of times by Soviet supporters in Russia and all over the world, words in which I had deeply believed and which had meant much to me:

“We want not one foot of foreign soil but we will not give up an inch of our own soil.”

Now Russia was seizing foreign soil in Poland and the Baltic states.

After the Soviet-Nazi pact, the Bolsheviks completely changed their domestic and foreign propaganda. The Soviet newspapers began to denounce the democracies in the same violent terms they had used on Hitler only a short while before. The word “anti-Fascism” was relegated to the archives. And, of course, not a hint of a dissenting note.

How was it possible to reverse the minds of 180,000,000 people in twenty-four hours and make them feel, think, and say exactly the opposite of what they had felt, said, and thought the day before? What was the technique? I know how it worked on me, one of the 180,000,000. I suppose it worked the same way on the others.

The tremendous power of the Soviet propaganda apparatus and Russia's complete isolation from the outside world are hard for the Soviet individual to resist. The Russians have no means of learning a different viewpoint. There is only the official press and the official radio. The few who could hear and understand foreign radio stations would never accept the word of a foreign commentator. For years the Russians were told that there was no greater enemy in the world than Fascism. Less than a year before the Soviet-German pact, Alexei Tolstoi, the writer, said at a protest meeting against Jewish pogroms in Germany that “we must not imitate the Middle Ages by comparing them to Nazi Germany.” His words were drowned in wild cheers. The Russians were sincere, convinced anti-Fascists. But the skilled Soviet propaganda of the after-pact period found words to make them swallow the sudden shuffling of cards and become hostile to the democracies.

It is not easy for those who never followed the Soviet press and radio to understand how this is done. When the Soviet government wants the people to be interested in an

event either because this event is important enough or because another event has to be pushed into the background, a barrage of propaganda unheard of in the democratic world is let loose.

In early 1937 there were, for instance, three such events in rapid succession: the death of the much-beloved head of the heavy industry, Sergo Ordzhonikidze; the centenary of the poet Pushkin's death; and the Radek-Piatakov trial. For days and days newspapers, magazines, theater programs, etc., devoted most of their space to these events. The radio talked of hardly anything else in speeches, sketches, songs, and news items. There was no escape. It entered and ruled your mind and overcame whatever resistance you had put up against it. Before you noticed it, you and anyone else you saw would think and talk of nothing else. Then, one morning you woke up and found that what was of uppermost importance last night was a thing of the past and another event had stepped into the foreground to be hammered into your brain.

I was as helpless as all other Russians were. While in Moscow, even to me, who read the foreign press and listened to foreign broadcasts, who made trips abroad and had a foreign husband and many foreign friends, the outside world seemed a backwoods. And even during the last years in Russia, when I looked at things with very critical eyes, I was not able to shake off the monur mental power of Soviet propaganda and isolation.

Once in 1938 I caught myself applauding for several minutes a movie "short" (lasting over an hour) showing Stahn delivering an endless speech. I had heard the speech when it was first delivered. Later I had read it in the newspaper. I had seen it reprinted and requoted in every little newspaper and magazine. I was sick and tired of the speech. It cut my ear to hear Stalin's bad Russian accent. I utterly disliked his nervous water-drinking and giggling, after which he coyly covered his cheek and mouth with his hand. And here I was loudly applauding just as millions of Russians did whenever Stalin appeared on the screen.

This reaction to Stalin was not due to any love for him. Accompanying the purges, a typical Soviet propaganda campaign was conducted to make Stalin beloved by the people. Soviet citizens might fear Stalin or admire his organizational abilities, but they never had the same warm feeling and adoration for him as they had had for Lenin, for whom no love-arousing campaign was ever conducted. Throughout the Soviet Union many hundreds of thousands of children were named after Lenin but I never heard of a Russian child being named Joseph after Stalin. The pro-Stalin propaganda hammered into the Soviet people entered their heads but not their hearts.

While the world rang with the anxiety and shame of Munich, the new purged history of the Bolshevik party came out. It was a book thoroughly falsifying history, and glorifying Stalin as the creator of the Red Army and as the father of all Soviet achievements. It was heralded for weeks in a clanging campaign too noisy even for a Soviet campaign. For days die Pravda squeezed vitally important world news into a tiny space and reprinted the new "Bible" by chapters. At that period I was glued day and night to the radio to listen to foreign broadcasts. I had read the history in the

Pravda and was disgusted with its lies. But when the Big Day came and the book appeared in the bookstores, I rushed out early in the morning with thousands of other excited Muscovites and stood in line for many hours to buy a copy of it.

The Arbat street, on which our line was standing, connects the Arbat peasant market with the station which brings the peasants into Moscow. We were joined by many collective farmers who, seeing a huge line, patiently stood in it thinking it was for textile goods or other such luxury and were greatly disappointed as they approached the store to find it was a bookstore.

In 1937-1938 several new bridges were built in Moscow. They were hailed as tremendous unique Soviet achievements. Adults and children alike used to go regularly to watch the building of the bridges. I knew perfectly well that beautiful bridges, churches, pantheons, roads, and palaces had been built centuries ago all over the world with slave labor, with blood and sweat. But so great was the power of propaganda that I used to get very excited over the new Moscow bridges, eagerly watched their progress, and saw in them a sign of the remarkable character of the Soviet regime.

In their eagerness to please Stalin, his associates celebrated in splendor the thousandth anniversary of his compatriot, the Georgian poet Rustaveli. The portraits of the handsome bard and his poem, "The Tiger Sled," adorned walls, windows, and paper, wherever a portrait could be painted and a poem printed. Learned men wrote long dissertations on the great man and school children had to memorize the poem. I do not believe in forcing literary tastes on anyone. I found the whole performance ridiculous. But after a couple of weeks I succumbed to sheer strength; I obediently read the poem and Rustaveli's biography, and, like a good girl, never failed to discuss it—favorably, of course—in company.

Chapter 27

The entrance of Russia into the war in June, 1941, and the splendid fight put up by her people has not changed my attitude to the Soviet dictatorship, and the sorry spectacle of another dizzy turnabout of American Communists and fellow travelers has only strengthened my distrust of them and my belief in the necessity of clean and honest thinking.

My desire for Russia's victory and my feelings for the Russians' suffering are great. I have many dear friends there. My sons' generation, which I saw and helped grow up, are dying in a struggle against an inhuman enemy, who never for one moment ceased being my bitterest enemy. My sympathies and heart are with the Russian people but my mind refuses to justify today what I considered wrong in Russia before Hitler's attack forced Russia into the war against Fascism.

I cannot because of this attack justify dictatorship today. I believe today as I did before June, 1941, that dictatorship is bad; that it makes people unscrupulous; that it accounts for overnight flip-flops on orders from above, for the death of principle and for the birth of cynicism. I believe today as much as I did before that to the American friends of Stalin's dictatorship the only thing that counts is power; that they kill the spirit of an organization if that helps to control it for their own purposes, which have little to do with building a better world. And I believe today as much as I did before in the capacity of people to think for themselves without any big or little fuhrer telling them from time to time in mass meetings or in newspaper articles what they are to think now.

From the first day Russia entered the war I had no doubt that she was well equipped for fighting it. She had prepared for it for over a decade. Of course, I never saw the secret factories which the Soviet government had erected in many parts of the country. But I often heard about them. We all knew that each year many young men were drawn into the army for special training. On the Red Square during parades and elsewhere we saw new military equipment which made foreign experts gape with astonishment. The experts thought these were merely show pieces to impress the outside world. But Russians knew well that they were more than that. They also knew all those years that their sacrifices were not merely to have better apartments and more shoes. They knew that industrialization meant a mechanized modern army.

I was sure that Russia would fight well if attacked. The people, I knew, would fight for their country and their future, in which they had and have an undiminished hope. I knew that even a war unpopular with the population would draw every ounce of

strength and energy into it. In a dictatorship it is easy to make a quick transfer from peace to war. It is easier when the war is a crusade as this war is.

I had no doubt that the Russians would fight fullheartedly and heroically. They have all earthly reasons for it. They have education, jobs, medical care, vacations, and old-age pensions. They have no say in formulating their policies but they firmly believe when the government tells them that Russia is the greatest and freest democracy on earth. If some have their doubts about that, it does not make any difference at this moment. Their country is young, rich, vigorous, with tremendous possibilities for a wonderful future. For this future men, women, and children are willing to give their lives. The Russians do not want anyone, and certainly not Hitler, to make their future for them. They know that a defeat would be the end of the country which they love, whether it is called the Soviet Union or Russia.

Throughout their whole history, during centuries of oppression and tyranny, Russians have always fought well against an invader. And they have always deeply loved Russia. They loved Russia before 1935 when Stalin gave love of Russia his blessing. They loved her when the name of Russia was prohibited and replaced by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. They loved her when the words Mother Russia, motherland, or fatherland (unless it was the Socialist Fatherland) were jeered at because a proletarian is supposed to have no fatherland. The young generation read and loved the Russian classics even when these were called “servants of the aristocracy” and before the present deluge of nationalist propaganda was let loose. Their devotion to the Soviet Union was always great. They worshiped their Soviet heroes—aviators, arctic explorers, the great men and women of the revolution and of the civil war, as well as the great men and women of science, industry, and agriculture. If many of these heroes were dethroned during the purge, this did not undermine the Soviet patriotism of the young or of their elders.

Maurice Hindus told me that in 1942 he found among middle-aged Russians great elation because they could openly be Russian patriots again. It made Hindus happy. It made me unhappy because I find it terrible that any human feelings should be directed by green and red lights.

I do not believe that this artificial revival of Russian nationalism was necessary. The bond with Russia's past, at least with that part of it of which the present-day Russian can be proud, was always there. It was only suppressed by the same government which now bubbles over with love for the old czars and generals. I am sure that the power of Soviet propaganda has succeeded in making the young Soviet generation see a dove in bloodthirsty Ivan the Terrible, see an angel in that supreme autocrat, Peter the Great, and see old czarist generals as Garibaldi.

But Soviet patriotism was not in need of this or any other artificial incentive. Fat or lean years, purges or freedom-promising Constitution—it was always there. It fed on the people's old love for Russia, on the new life the Soviet regime gave to oppressed millions, on the progress and light it brought to Russia, on the promise it held for the future, and on a hostile world which could not be trusted.

Patriotism is not there today because Stalin has rediscovered Russia's past. It was not less strong when Soviet youth proudly considered itself the vanguard of the world's march to freedom and did not look for its gods among dust-covered czarist warriors of centuries ago.

Patriotism is not there because Stalin has reverted to the czars' idea of racial solidarity with "the little Slav brothers" of the Balkans; from the first day of the revolution the Bolsheviks successfully instilled in the whole country a deep love for the oppressed and exploited of all nations irrespective of blood. And patriotism is not there today because Stalin has shot all the alleged Fifth Columnists.

There are, of course, no Fifth Columnists in Russia. There never were. How could there be? What has made men become Quislings who betray their country? It was the hope that the foreign enemy would give them more than their country gave them, especially more power. Or the hope that the enemy would remove from their country what they disliked in it: labor unions, civil liberties, and such. For this the Quislings were glad to risk the hatred of their compatriots and the loss of freedom, honor, and human dignity. But suppose a Russian is displeased with Stalin's regime because he wants more freedom, more contact with the outside world, fewer concentration camps, and fewer executions. Would the invading Hitler give him this? Why on earth should any Russian become a Fifth Columnist? What Hitler could give no Russian wants. He would rather die. This is why there are no Fifth Columnists in Russia. Not because Stalin shot them. Those he shot were no Fifth Columnists.

The Russians are a strong, young, enthusiastic people. The Soviet system has given them many advantages. Without this system Russia might not have been able to resist Hitler. Life held rich promise before the war. There is no doubt that the Russians want no other system but their own Soviet system improved by translating the new Constitution from paper, where it is now, into life. They are not interested at this moment in imposing their system on anyone else. As a matter of fact, they are little interested in anyone but themselves right now. All Russia wants is to rid the country of the invader and then to devote all her immense resources, strength, and manpower to a speedy reconstruction of what Hitler destroyed. Communist slogans and appeals to world revolution are a thing of the past even if occasionally repohshed as a reminder that they could be used if necessary. If this reconstruction succeeds—^and, knowing Russia, I see no reason why it should not—^Russia will become a powerful factor in this world which owes the Russians a tremendous debt.

Honest efforts to create a progressive, decent world will be more helpful in democratizing Russia than all the sugary lies told by her political friends and certainly more than the vicious lies told by her enemies. If all the other nations show by their acts that their sole aim is friendly co-operation of all nations, large and small, white and colored, for the good of humanity, and not for conquest, power and privileges, Russia will have m fit into such a new world.

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