SOVIET ASIA

Progress and Problems

By the same author:

TOURING IN 1600

MODERN TRANSLATION

INSIDE OUT: AN INTRODUCTION TO AUTOBIOGRAPHY

SOVIET ASIA

Progress and Problems

By

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CONTENTS

PREFACE

THIS BOOK WAS NOT INTENDED TO HAVE ANY PREFACE; BUT TO begin on page one. Still, the text stands as it did when it was finished, in 1940; and nothing else has been standing still since then. It is as well, therefore, to say that the book epitomizes a survey of available evidence concerning Soviet Asia, 1924–39; that is, for the first fifteen years of Soviet control and experiment there. A survey must needs take into account the permanent as well as the novel: the static, the slow, as well as the headlong rush. It does do that; but excludes the journalistic and the controversial: so far as possible. It is therefore not up to date, because it cannot be that: nor out of date, because it need not be that. Even between the writing of this preface and the date it comes into the reader's hands, changes will occur which will supply a touch of sadness, or of absurdity, to the text such as the writer could never anticipate being there: much more so as between the writing of the text and 1942. The net result will, nevertheless, it is hoped, remain as intended, namely, that readers will end up finding Soviet affairs less bewildering than when they began the book, and even have some improved means of interpreting unforeseen and unforeseeable changes, such as are bound to be happening month by month, year by year.

SOVIET ASIA

CHAPTER I

WHAT SOVIET ASIA CONSISTS OF

CONSIDER HOW MUCH THERE IS THAT YOU DO NOT KNOW about your own parish, both about what went on in it in days gone by and about what goes on in it now, collectively and individually; and then consider, too, how much less than that you know about each of all the other 15,000 parishes in England and Wales: multiply that sum of ignorance by three hundred, in order to make allowances for the difference in size, and then you will be becoming aware of how much a native of Soviet Asia has to learn about Soviet Asia. Multiply this, again, by some unknown quantity to allow for the extra difficulty in the way of learning about it all by reason of the rarity of communications there; and add to that our own unfamiliarity with the names and scenes that are familiar to that same native or to the millions and millions of the other natives, and some realization will be growing up of how much we ourselves have to learn about it.

To those of us who have never been to this part of the world, it is known as a network of lines drawn on coloured paper, plus descriptions by writers, plus pictures, plus our imagination. As to the lines, some are straight, some crooked: all of them are put there by map-makers, the straight ones at the bidding of mathematicians, the crooked ones at the bidding of politicians and geographers. As a rule, neither mathematicians, nor politicians, nor geographers, nor map-makers have been to see these regions. Most of the writers, too, have seen little or nothing for themselves, but repeat what has been said by other writers who may, or may not, have visited certain sections at more or less distant

dates. No one person has ever seen all of it, or visited all of it, much less lived in all of it, yet.

There exists no wholly accurate map of the region, not even in the new Soviet atlas, the finest atlas in existence; and there is no point at which we do not find ourselves short of necessary information.

Turning, then, first, to what we can see on the maps, we see boundary-lines drawn in the west, hair-breadth lines, on one side of which is said to be Asia and, on the other, Europe. And from the writings we learn that there are two opinions as to where Asia and Europe end and begin in the south: and that on the east of Europe there is no hair-breadth line in reality, but a border-land some seven hundred miles across. To start with, therefore, we must say what we mean by Soviet Asia. What is here meant is Siberia together with what has been annexed to Siberia. Siberia comprises the whole of the north of Asia. To the south of Siberia a boundary runs north of Manchuria, mainly along the Amur river; and thence runs a line of other natural boundaries, in the shape of some of the most tremendous mountain-ranges in the world, a wavy line trending westwards at first, past Mongolia; then south-west, past Chinese Turkestan, down nearly to British India, westwards again past Afghanistan, and so to the Caspian Sea.

In writing of land, of the realities of land as affecting human beings, do we not need to know four things? Where it is, how big it is, what it is made of down below, and what on top? The first query has been answered already: the measurements can be left to make themselves evident later. But what does need to be dealt with here and now are the foundations and the surface.

Is it not with land as with a house, that the foundations are never seen, but affect the lives of the inhabitants every hour of those lives, and in every way? In the case of land it

is more so than in the case of a house: since, as a rule, the ancestors of these inhabitants have been living on that land for centuries. It has been a factor in what they have been, while they, in their turn, have made their descendants what they are; it has moulded the people, whereas the people mould houses and that out of the substance of the land or its products. The foundations of a house affect its inhabitants simply by being there; but the foundations of the land affect their lives by reason of the inherent characteristics of those foundations, characteristics which those inhabitants never put there.

Before there were any inhabitants there, most of this particular land lay under water. The great lakes and seas that remain are the remains of that ocean. What the bed and borders of that ocean rested upon and are made of, consists of material so varied, so rich in all that ancient custom and modern science can use, that all the possibilities of life yet realized, yet dreamt of, are infinitesimal compared with the possibilities that await fashioning and gathering. What is known proves that. What is known is little compared with what may reasonably be believed. But all co-exist under conditions which preclude them, for the most part, from being either gathered or fashioned — at present. It is the surface that makes that so. So far as human beings of to-day, or of any conceivable to-morrow, are concerned, a few yards down, a few yards up, from where they stand is what makes all the difference in their lives; and the surfaces of Soviet Asia are mostly barren, either through frost or through drought.

Almost all the limits of Soviet Asia are fringed with snow. The height of the mountains south and east is such that the cold there is arctic, and the winds that descend from these mountains may be arctic in temperature. The latitude may be sub-tropical; but the cold may nevertheless be terrific.

It forms the greatest continuous dominion that has ever been known, open to the ocean on two sides; but its share of those oceans is unnavigable for almost all of the year. It is the land with more great rivers than any other land; but these rivers are mostly unnavigable too: and the land's chief shortage is of water. It is the land of all others rich in resources; but the riches are as unmarketable as the rivers are unnavigable. It is the land with the world's greatest roads; but the chief roads lie buried under sand: those who try to travel where the roads run die. The traffic died long ago.

It is a land in two parts: Siberia and the rest. The rest is that which lies between China and the Caspian Sea.

Siberia's boundaries are historical rather than natural boundaries. It has delimited itself as the line of least resistance for the expansion of the Russian people. Even before they existed as a people they began expanding thither, and its outline is roughly that of the Empire of the Tsars as that existed in the early nineteenth century.

In writing of places there is generally one of two difficulties to be encountered. Either the place has not been written about and the unfamiliarity with it needs to be dispelled; or else it has been written up, and that constitutes the greater hindrance of the two. Siberia has been written up. We grow up with a fixed idea of Siberia as a howling desert swept by icy winds, gloomy, unendurable, below zero and beyond hope. No picture could be more misleading. That picture is mainly literary stuff. It is Siberia as seen by exiles who were also great writers. With all respect to their sufferings, which were as great as their abilities, and to the sufferings of those scores of thousands for whom they spoke as much and as truly as for themselves, they spoke in part, however unconsciously, as townsmen who were being compelled to live in the country. They knew Siberia as a Dartmoor prisoner knows Dartmoor.

Siberia is congenial to free Russians. They found it so right into the seventeenth century. Their ancestors have been accustomed to live in a land of many forests and difficult roads and great rivers. Siberia is the same. Its forests form the greatest forest in the world. It is even more a land of great rivers than is Russia. The latter is primarily the land of the three rivers; the Dnieper, the Don, and the Volga. But Siberia is still more a Land of the Three Rivers; each one greater than any the Russians find at home. Siberia's great three, the Lena, the Yenisei, and the Ob, are all 2,700 miles long, or longer. Each drains a basin as large as Western Europe. No other territory has three rivers so great. All of both Americas has only four; and all Africa two. And then there are numbers of minor rivers which would be major rivers in other countries.

The Three Rivers of Russia flow south; the Three Rivers of Siberia flow north. But the Russians, in overflowing thither, could remain a river race; just as much so as the English, in their expansion, could remain a seafaring race.

But these three rivers, and the majority of the others, are frozen most of the way most of the year. The subsoil of the areas they drain and flow through is mostly in the region where subsoils remain frozen the whole year round. When the rivers thaw and their waters rise, the floods cannot drain away underground: in spring they are seas, in winter glaciers; sometimes running riot, sometimes in strait-waistcoats. Half of all Russian dominions lie in that frozen-subsoil area, where only the surface ever thaws, from three to five feet down, leaving the depths below perpetually frozen; a subsoil on which railway-lines can hardly be laid, nor buildings built, nor roads made, nor water-pipes be dug in, nor aeroplanes alight, with safety. South of that area lies the greatest forest in the world, through which roads cannot be made, and in which people cannot live or industries thrive; save only with

an almost prohibitive struggle. Through this forest and this frozen area, the rivers cut their way: they alone provide means of transport and communication so far that along the river-banks alone, for the most part, do settlements arise. Consequently it is in the directions of rivers that roads run when they do run; an entirely reverse course of development to that which we are used to here, where roads, and consequently railways, lie rather away from the rivers than alongside their banks. Then, too, Siberia is thought of as flat. Only half of it is; that half which is the continuation of Russian plain. The eastern half is mountainous.

Turning to that other section which is outside Siberia, the south-west annexations, something similar is seen occurring with its rivers. Throughout much of it, over tracts which used to be fertile and populous and highly civilized, where used to run the east–west roads which linked up the civilizations of the Far East with those of the Near East and Europe, drying-up has set in which has obliterated the roads and the fertility. That drying-up still goes on. A caravan may come upon one more well into which sand has driven since the leaders last passed that way; and all may die of thirst beside that waterless well. Through the sand, as through the forests, rivers alone can cut through and keep communications open. There, too, settlements persist and arise along the course of the rivers, and there alone can desert-railways be safely laid. Nothing can prosper elsewhere for want of drinking-water. All over Soviet Asia the question of drinking-water dominates every other question; provides for, or prohibits, every plan.

However, Soviet Asia contains some of the world's finest scenery and most fruitful land: many places are well provided with water, and amongst these another spot which

has been written up, Samarkand. In one book of travel after another do we find that the impulse to wander into Central Asia came from Flecker's 'Hassan.' This by no means applies only to English wanderers: two of those quoted in the following pages, one Swiss, one Russian, say the same: in fact, the Russian's impulse started from seeing Flecker's play in London. Well, it was a good start and a reasonable; and Flecker himself was inspired by a long line of worthy predecessors: but it was inspiration and not sight that moved Flecker, and what the accumulation of the centuries meant to those predecessors and to him is unfortunately not to be found, otherwise than conventionally, within the limits of a single hasty visit to what remains of Samarkand. It might well be forgotten for a while, and that kind of life be looked for at Merv. But when one comes to consider what to speak of, what to leave out, how much of the old and how much of the new call for attention in order to present the best picture of things as they are to-day amidst all the difficulties involved by too much evidence of one kind and too little of another being obtainable, it is clear that the vast scale on which Nature and Man have worked, and do work, between the Ural Mountains and Sakhalin and the North Pole and Afghanistan, will make it needful to select some samples of what is going on and leave it at that rather than attempt too much.

Here, then, follows a preliminary mention of four areas which are as typical as any, and whose recent developments will receive special attention in the fourth chapter. These are: I — The basin of one of the great rivers, the Lena; II — Tanna-Tuva; not Soviet in name, but a focus of Soviet activity; III — Tadjikistan, the section nearest to British territory; IV — Birobidjan, the Jewish colony. On any ordinary map, any of the last three will be covered with the point of one's thumb, and the first with any ordinary-sized

thumb. Nevertheless, it will be seen that these are big enough as bigness is reckoned in Europe.

All four are typical enough of the permanencies, and of the innovations, obvious on Soviet territory at the present time and during the past fifteen years, and indicative of the likelihoods of the future. The main feature is the inheritance of the present from the past, an inheritance which the present has no choice but to pass on to the future. 'One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; and the earth abideth for ever.' As to what is characteristic of the present, it would serve no useful purpose to state that in terms of geography, which is the subject matter of this chapter. Existing boundaries signify nothing in the way of natural limits, or regional harmony, or racial affinity, or kinship of thought and feeling, or common interests; nothing but enforced adherence to an economic-strategic scheme chameleonic in its mutability. It is a scheme which has something in common with the division of France into departments. When this latter was arranged, it seemed a sound idea. Horses were the chief means of covering ground, and everyone was to be put within a twenty-four hours' journey of his chief town. But the invention of railways destroyed all the sense in that arrangement; and all the best topographical writing about France has gone back to basing itself on a regional basis.

All that needs to be said, then, about Tadjikistan and Birobidjan and Tanna-Tuva can best be said later, but there is a general aspect about the Lena basin which it is in place to mention here. The outflow of the river is where the coastline of the U.S.S.R. ends, the northern boundary of Siberia. But the utilization of the Lena is bound up with the control and navigability of the Polar ocean into which it flows. Control of the Polar ocean ends — where? No one knows. The questions raised over this control imply a new con-

ception of geography. Hitherto we have taken for granted that our Earth consists of land and water. Now Soviet enterprise interprets it as consisting of land, water, and ice. Whose is the ice? And the ice moves. And the ice can be used as an air-base. The U.S.S.R. is Canada's next-door neighbour and the future has to show where the dividing-line between the two is to lie, and where their respective aeroplanes are to start from.

Another general geographical question arises out of that inheritance of any given area, just referred to. The inhabitants go with it. They neither can nor will move; nor, usually, be moved. Their minds and ways are perforce modified by the climate they live amidst, minds and ways already ingrained into them by ancestors moulded by those same conditions. That continuity is an overwhelming fact in face of which all new efforts are but manipulations of the uncontrollable. As we go back successively to the history, the geography, the geology, of the peoples, soils, subsoils and environments, the fortunes and misfortunes of all those who now live in Soviet Asia come to seem more and more ephemeral and insignificant, those of parasites which live on the surface of the earth there like fleas on a dog, or dreams in a brain. From the point of view of eternity — yes: collectively, perhaps, yes: but individually, no. Surrounded and dominated, finally to be destroyed, by that cruelty which is the first and last condition of the facts of the Universe in relation to human existence, does not Soviet Asia rather consist (to us as individuals) of other individuals sensitive to the suffering that this cruelty entails, and to all that other infinite cruelty which human beings inflict on each other, and that, to all appearances, so gratuitously?

During the last fifteen years endless changes have been made, affecting every individual for better and for worse. This book is concerned with those individuals, how they

are faring to-day. It is not concerned with the ideas of Marx, the ideals of Lenin, the administration of Stalin; others talk at length about these.

> 'The earth hath bubbles, as the water has;
> And these are of them.'

A book about them makes for easy writing and easy reading; but remains on the surface. The realities are complex and manifold, torrential, uncontrolled, seething with cross-currents set up by undercurrents: like a river in flood. Any book about the inhabitants of the Soviets which does not give that impression, subordinating all others, falls short of the mark. This does not allow of smoothed-out manipulation of conventional terms, like Capitalism, Communism, etc., which signify nothing and serve none but controversial ends and the camouflaging of unavowed actualities. Instead of ready-made conclusions, this book is concerned with the men, women, and children of Soviet Asia of to-day, and their prospects for to-morrow: millions upon millions living and dying with the unknown beneath them and the unknown above and around, as their ancestors lived and died, and they on the same surface travelling to an unknown beyond.

CHAPTER II

HOW SOVIET ASIA CAME TO BE RUSSIAN

THE STORY OF HOW SECTIONS OF ASIA CAME UNDER THE RULE of the Union becomes clearest if it is divided up twice over, first from the point of view of time, and secondly from the point of view of space. The second will show the advance from river to river; that is, from the Volga to the Ob, from the Ob to the Lena, and from the Lena to the Amur and the Pacific. Division by time will show up a Muscovite period, then a Russian period, and finally the establishment of the Union.

Before clear ideas can be established about the process political terms must be defined. . . . They are subject to some confusion at present. 'Russia' has ceased to exist. It is a term that can only be applied to the dominions of Peter the Great and his successors up to 1917. The old English word 'Muscovite' is the term which puts matters more clearly and accurately. The whole of the northern territories under the control of the Union consists of the 'Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic,' ignoring divisions into Europe and Asia or Russia and Siberia: this does indicate the origin and development of the political history of these territories ever since centralization began, namely, since the establishment of Moscow as an independent Power and of the expansion of its control eastwards. The term 'Russian' in the title, as the title stands for the present, is an ethnological convention which is out of relation to the facts of the case; the initiative, the determination, the originality, which uplifted Russia into its dominating position came from that same body of people which gave Moscow its dominating

position in the fifteenth century, those who lived round about Moscow; people from those same districts which ever since then have provided the ruling class, and still do. They differ so much amongst themselves that no ethnological term can properly be used to describe them. But since Russia is an accepted term, it may be stated that 'Russia' differs from most other countries in having no well-defined natural boundaries; none such as the sea-coast of England provides for England. It is simply the land of the Russians. It radiates from Moscow, and its dominions have expanded along the line of least resistance thence. The concentration at Moscow in the first instance, the transference to St. Petersburg later, the transfer back to Moscow later still and the re-naming of St. Petersburg as Leningrad, truly symbolize the history of a people who have never been a nation any more than a race, but assuredly have been a fact. It is a fact that is symbolized all over again in census figures. The population of the whole of the Union territories amounted, according to the 1939 census, to about 170 millions. Of that number 109 millions are included in this R.S.F.S. Republic, 31 millions in the Ukraine, and the remaining 30 millions are spread over vast regions already outlined. From the Ukraine, as will be seen, the northern peoples drew soldiers who constituted an indispensable help in their expansions and conquests. The other 'republics,' extensive as they are, have not one of them a population approaching that of London.

As to that growth from town to empire, from empire to Union, and that advance from river to river, ultimately to the Pacific, it will be convenient to divide those too into periods, beginning with the attainment of independence and overlordship by Moscow, going on to the adventures of the Stroganov family; thence to the triple enterprises of the Stroganovs, the Cossacks, and the rulers of Moscow; and

thence to consolidation under the Tsars, and the attempt of the Union, still in progress, to regain and re-organize all that the Tsars annexed.

Once upon a time, then, the Mongols invaded westwards, crossed the Ural Mountains, and settled down around the River Volga; having disposed of the chief men of the neighbouring districts by holding a feast to celebrate a victory over them and sitting it out on planks underneath which those chief men were lying until they died. The chief city of those parts, Kiev, was destroyed, and the Mongol rule lasted for two centuries and a half. Little by little the princes of Moscow organized power and independence until they were able to take the lead against the Mongols; the year 1478 may be taken as marking the end of the power of the latter near Moscow. The ruler of Moscow took the title of Tsar and by 1556 even the Mongols to the south ceased to be a danger. Another rival, the city of Novgorod, to the north, had been conquered in 1471; and even earlier the princes of Moscow had enlarged the lands under their control tenfold within a century and a half.

By the middle of the fifteenth century, therefore, there was no reason why the Tsar of Moscow should not extend his control as far as, and even beyond, the Ural Mountains, if he wanted to; but yet there was no particular reason why he should want to, not from the point of view of a Tsar of Moscow. Others thought differently. The people of Novgorod, for all that they had failed in war, were better acquainted with questions of supply and demand than were the Muscovites. Novgorod was the chief centre to which European merchants travelled north-eastwards to buy and to sell, and the people of Novgorod had been sending out expeditions, Siberia-way, as far back as the fourteenth century in search of the furs that were the most valuable goods they had to offer.

When Moscow came finally to the overlordship, a merchant of Novgorod, Anika Stroganov, a dealer in salt, was in business near by. His family was well known to the ruling house; Anika's grandfather had paid the ransom for one prince of Moscow when the latter had been taken prisoner — paid it all out of his own pocket, unconditionally. Salt was a prime requisite and, in days gone by, had come from far away, paying dues to foreigners on the journey. Anika Stroganov saw to it that salt came from near enough to pay no dues, coming direct from and through Moscow territory. That was why his father had left Novgorod for Moscow: moving near to a point where all the great river-routes of the country converged, more nearly than they did at any other point. Anika not only supplied the city and the Court with salt; he exported it. Anika also did business in furs, in pearls, and in buying up his neighbours' lands when they were to be bought up cheaply. He built up a business in luxuries, which brought him into touch with the rich men of Moscow and the Court. He was liberal with gifts, but in doing business he only did it for cash down. He was also a devout man; liberal to the Church. The Church was so zealous in the cause of temperance that it procured a prohibition of vodka. But, there being no vineyards in those parts, it did not prohibit wine. Anika did business also in foreign wines.

Now, in the course of his fur-trading, Anika Stroganov sent agents to the Urals and beyond: even to the land of Mangaseia, by which name the district between the mouths of the rivers Ob and Yenisei was then known. His agents had instructions to do no harm to natives: consequently, in the course of acquiring furs, they likewise acquired more knowledge of geography than anyone but the Stroganov agents possessed. When questions were being asked at Court about this land of Mangaseia, whence came these

beautiful furs which sometimes were sold and sometimes were given away by the generous Anika, the latter went to the Tsar saying that there was more to be obtained out of the land of Mangaseia by peace and by trading than by force, but that there was no way thither direct: it could only be approached from the south, by way of the land of Perm. Perm lay east of Moscow. Might he be granted this land of Perm? Salt was to be found there and Moscow was still short of salt. Minerals were to be found there; wheat would grow there: he, Stroganov, was in need of wheat wherewith to feed his travelling agents and their men; iron he needed for the furtherance of other businesses. He was granted a charter: all uncultivated land thereabouts for twenty years, and Anika being then (1558) seventy years of age, the charter was made out in the name of his son Gregory. When Gregory came to examine the wording, he was taken aback by the number of things he was forbidden to do, the strictness which he had to observe as regards the good character of any labourer in these new fields, etc. The charter had been made out in accordance with the best standards of international morality: Gregory protested that they could not carry out business-plans if they were so hampered. Anika replied, 'The Tsar knows his own business — and I mine.' None of the conditions were observed. The ruler of Moscow ruled north and south of Moscow: Anika Stroganov ruled to the east; he and his sons and his sons' sons. For two hundred years and more no one but themselves even knew how much they did rule: because the Stroganov family made the maps.

The Tsar was overlord, however. When writing to King Edward VI of England he could describe himself as Commander of all Siberia, knowing as much and owning as little of Siberia as, later, did our Charles II of Canada when he described himself as Sovereign of Canada. And none of the

Stroganov family diminished that status; they had no wish to usurp or to carry on wars; they were entitled to build fortresses for defence and they did build them; but they never went in for attack. So far as is known, moreover, they were not tyrannical, either; complaints were laid against them, which were quashed somehow, either by bribing the judges or in some other way; but, as exploiters went then and for many generations afterwards, they seem to have been as mild as abundant profiteering and bare-faced confiscation of other people's land permitted.

The main fact about their enterprise is that it led onwards to the unknown and the unexplored. As time went on, the information they received led them to form definite plans for trade with China. But the way thither was barred by force. In order to overcome this, they acted by proxy, inducing the Tsar to take the project up and engage Cossacks to carry it out. Thereafter, so far as exploration went, the Stroganovs fall into the background. As famous men, their place is taken by one Yermak. He appears in 1580. He never ceases to go on appearing in books about exploration which deal with dreaming, scheming and adventuring in Siberia.

Here perhaps we had better leave Yermak for a moment and turn to consider these said books about exploration, and what records are to be found of the discovery and conquest of this, the greatest extent of land that has ever been discovered by one race of men. In most books about exploration the subject is never mentioned, however serious students and scholars the authors may be. In others of the same kind, as in histories, some reference to it may occur; brief, unimaginative, uninforming. In fact, the subject awaits its author, at any rate in English. In Russian the most recent is that of Youri Semionov (1938), translations of which are to be had in German and in French. But this only deals with

the conquest of Siberia up to 1867: the other annexations to the south-west do not fall within the scope of the volume, any more than recent events in Soviet Asia. In English perhaps the most satisfactory is the *Russia and Asia* by Prince A. Lobanov-Rostovsky (1933), the more so since it includes a list of other books in English on the subject and deals with all conquests by Russians in Asia. But the subject is worth special research for new material and ideas, and re-writing accordingly; especially in English.

To return to Yermak — his reputation would be the first to suffer. The story of his adventures that passes current as authentic was compiled (from hearsay) half a century after his death by a bishop who had an interest in creating a Yermak-myth. Yermak no doubt did exist and adventure, and he may have been the first to push Muscovite authority, and even control, as far as the River Ob. But there is no evidence that he was another Cortes.

In 1594 the Stroganovs' charter received an extension for a further twenty years. Ten years earlier — in the year, that is, of Yermak's death after a bare three years of freebooting — they were told by their agents of another great river farther on than the Ob; this was the first news of the Yenisei. The only interest that these rivers and regions presented to the Stroganovs and their agents was the fact that sables were plentiful thereabouts: their furs were those most in favour. It was the presence of these little animals in Siberia and in Canada that caused the one to be added to the Muscovite empire and the other to the British. They were so plentiful and so unafraid in Siberia that the women used to be able to knock them over the head on their way to draw water. The customary bargain with natives was to exchange an iron pot for as many skins as the pot would hold. But iron pots were heavy, vodka and tobacco weighed light, and vodka could be distilled from grain which was transported thither at public

expense to feed the hungry. So the hungry starved a little more, and the natives had old pots and new vices.

But extermination of animals proceeded fast enough for there to be good reason for the agents to push on discovering fresh supplies and for bands of Cossacks to push farther on still at their own risk. This risk was great: the more so inasmuch as the bands were few in numbers; far fewer than in the bands who were exploring on the other side of the world. But both alike rarely discovered what they set out to discover. On the other hand, both were for ever discovering something else, something which has infinitely greater interest for us than anything that possessed their minds. Both moved towards horizons without knowing what existed beyond those horizons, dividing up, as they went, what did not belong to them, and often dividing up regions before they reached them or had heard of them. Just as the Pope allotted what was not his to allot, so did Ivan the Terrible and his successors allot other lands to those who had never set foot on them, on the strength of imaginary maps, and to the exclusion of those who had just as much claim and equally little right. But where these two sets of adventurers differed was that the one set which became famous in Western Europe took their way westwards and set up a tradition that 'westwards the course of Empire takes its way,' the other set saw to it that eastwards their course of Empire took its way without historians and phrase-makers having discovered that much; and, for the most part, ignoring it even now.

There is one other point that might receive more attention; that is, the technique of it all. The heroics and the politics of exploration suffice to occupy the minds of those who write about exploration: but the fact remains that without the unremitting efforts of generations of unknown men to improve technical detail in the tools they used no explora-

tion could ever have taken place. The whole of the aspirations of generations of Columbuses had to await the invention and perfecting and realization of the possibilities of the rudder before the Columbus we have heard of could make a start. With the Cossacks, however, who went from river to river, from tributary to tributary, dragging their boats overland at intervals, we do not know enough about the technique of their boats, or of their other equipment, to comprehend why they went on subduing those who had all the advantage of fighting on their own ground against newcomers. The heroics of the subject account for it, of course, by valour alone, and by adding that, being too few to defend themselves, the Cossacks always attacked; etc. It is all the easier to state the case thus because such personal qualities were a factor. But we may doubt whether this was all — and await research.

Returning then, once more, to what was achieved, it will be found that the pace was tremendous, considering the character and extent of the country; and also that the advances were all based on the rivers. In 1609 a town was founded on the Yenisei near its confluence with one of its principal tributaries, the Lower Tunguska; in 1619 another town, Yeniseisk itself, near another principal confluence, that with the Angara. Both these tributaries ascend within comparatively short distances of the basin and tributaries of the River Lena. Consequently, in 1632, the town of Yakutsk came to be founded on this latter river at the point of its course where it bends farthest east, and near where the Aldan joins it: the Aldan being not only the biggest river which does run into it but also that which approaches closest to the Pacific coast. Within another ten years Yakutsk had become the administrative centre for Eastern Siberia. Exploration was continued thence in three directions; to the north-east, towards the Behring Sea and Kamtchatka; east-

wards to the Sea of Okhotsk; southwards towards the Amur river. The amount of initiative that all this required may be judged by the fact that Yakutsk was two years' journey from Moscow. It continued to be that until the Trans-Siberian Railway was built.

In the first direction there was much search for the mythical River Pougikha, supposed to be three years' journey from home, which had much the same place in Siberian history as did the Fountain of Perpetual Youth in South American. It was located in the farthest north-eastern corner. One man went in search of it by sea, was carried away by the currents in his little vessel, out to sea and round into the Pacific, thereby discovering the Behring Straits eighty years ahead of Behring. Armchair critics have proved to their own satisfaction and, unfortunately, to the satisfaction of others also, that this man, Dechnev, never took that route; but recent examination by better-equipped criticism has shown that Dechnev's account is substantiated by fuller knowledge. Dechnev sent in a report to Yakutsk about all this in 1655, seven years after he had made this voyage: yet in 1724 Peter the Great was giving instructions to Behring to ascertain whether or no Asia and America were joined together by land or whether they were divided by water. It was only in 1742 that Dechnev's report became known in St. Petersburg, having been unearthed at Yakutsk by a German six years previously. All that Peter had to guide him was a French map of 1706 showing Siberia as ending in a chain of mountains which disappeared into the unknown. A later map, designed at Amsterdam, depicted Siberia and America as continuous land. Yet maps existed in the intervening period in Siberia showing that Siberia was known to be bounded by sea. In short, sixty-seven years after Yermak had been dispatched marauding by the Stroganovs, a fort was being erected by Dechnev at the extreme point

farthest north-east of Moscow, seven thousand miles distant.

The Amur also was discovered by accident. A shortage of wheat was no uncommon trouble at Yakutsk. In 1642–3 there was a shortage which lasted ten months. From natives they heard of the 'Black Dragon' river to the south, whereabouts wheat was to be found. One Poyarkov was sent out to find that river and the wheat. He did find it and returned in three years' time with half of his men destroyed and the other half lodging complaints against him for his cruelty to them and to the natives. Meanwhile others were following up the same clue; the most successful, Khabarov, returned the year after he set out with the news that wheat was to be found there and could be brought to Yakutsk in two weeks. Hence the name of Khabarovsk for what is now the chief town in that region. But these moves southwards brought the Cossacks and Muscovites into contact with Mongols and Chinese, who were serious enemies.

Meanwhile, serious enemies had also been encountered on the south-western border, far away in Central Asia and extending right to the Volga. A movement was taking place amongst the Central Asian peoples similar to those movements in the past which had culminated in invasion of Europe and its partial subjection to Asiatic control. But it was just at this time (1636) that Russia was coming into existence. While pressed by the effects of recent disasters, and in the presence of enemies threatening from other sides as well, the new Romanov dynasty built forts along the line of advance and the Asiatics subsided into more or less peaceful settlement. It was the beginning of a new period on all fronts. The period of give-and-take was ending; the state of affairs was beginning which Peter the Great consolidated into an active assault in every direction, into control by the

central power where hitherto had existed merely direction at best; and into Empire.

The chief point that had to be settled in connection with the new state of affairs was settlement with the Chinese, the more so since the Chinese government also had been on the upgrade and was now as powerful and able as at any time. In 1685 an embassy left Moscow for Manchuria, headed by one of the most able men of the time, Golovin. It was necessary to send a plenipotentiary on an embassy which was to take two years to arrive at its destination and another two years on the return journey home. Golovin had instructions to abandon the Amur to the Chinese if he thought that advisable. The most experienced men in Far-Eastern affairs were taken up by Golovin in the course of his journey. When at last he met the ambassadors from the other side, he found them accompanied by two Jesuits as interpreters. The Russians were numerous and armed; but the Chinese had a full-sized army in the background. Golovin suggested that the best boundary between two great Powers was a river and proposed that the Amur should form that boundary. The Chinese thought his ideas on the subject of natural boundaries were admirable, but suggested that, in choosing a river, the Lena would be more suitable; so suitable indeed that it was obviously the intention of Heaven that it should be chosen. This implied the cession to the Chinese of the whole of the Far East. In the end the Amur was agreed on.

There was no detailed demarcation of boundaries, nor, in fact, knowledge, on either side, of the country through which their respective claims lay. Representatives, dependants, and allies of both parties continued to go their own way at their own risks. The Chinese tea-trade extended into Russia, and the Russian fur-trade extended into China. Adventurers met their deaths by drowning, by starvation, by scurvy or poisoned arrows: natives died by hundreds and

sables by thousands; thousands of prehistoric mammoths, too, were discovered in the no-man's-land away from the Chinese border, and turned to good account. In 1728–9 Behring made his first expedition, but brought back no proof, only the presumption, that Straits existed between Asia and America. In 1732 one Ivan Feodorov sailed to Alaska, and proved the case: in English accounts the credit is ascribed to his second-in-command, Gvozdiov, who wrote the narrative of the voyage when Feodorov died of its hardships almost immediately after its completion. Behring was returning in 1733 to make his conclusive investigations; but he was an old man and took six years on the land journey before reaching his port of departure.

Here, then, commences the Pacific-coast era of Russian development. This, too, was primarily a fur-trade matter. Otter had taken the place of sable as first-favourite and North America as a hunting-ground for them. Trading went on as before; small groups of hardy desperadoes out for loot; no missionaries, no conciliation: if more otters were killed than natives it was because there were more otters to kill, and only the latter had a price in the market. The Hudson Bay Company on the one side and the Russian-American Company on the other were busy exploiting Arctic North America; but there happened to be too few engaged in the trade and too much land to exploit for competition to become serious or delimitation to become urgent. But the era of American-Pacific politics had begun for Russia and the man had arrived too, Baranov. Baranov was a director of the Russian-American Company; a man of ideas, philanthropic after a fashion, far-seeing, and a leader. He initiated a humane policy with regard to the natives of Alaska, and set out to discover some other means of obtaining supplies thither than that of having them brought all the way across

Siberia. He directed, and ultimately conducted, voyaging down the Pacific coast for that purpose; proposing, too, to annex enough of the shores of the Pacific to give the Tsar the opportunity to control that Ocean. He succeeded. By 1819, when he died, his plans were far enough advanced for his successor to annex California in 1823. But, in consequence of the time then taken to cover the distance involved, such men had to act on their own responsibility. The Government of St. Petersburg had never done more than turn a blind eye to the activities of the Russian-American Company when the latter diverged into political complications, and had been ready to come to terms with the English over North America when the question of competition did become urgent. The Tsar refused to accept the gift of California at all, seeing that doing so would involve recognition of the United States of Mexico, which had renounced allegiance to the monarch whom the Tsar thought entitled to decide Mexican affairs. This policy was carried to its logical outcome when Alaska was sold to the United States of North America in 1867, and a territorial interest in the American continent on the part of the Russian Government abandoned. Thenceforward effect was given to an instinct, or necessity, whichever it was, to concentrate on expansion in Asia alone. The resolution arrived at by gradual reconsiderations during the first half of the nineteenth century at St. Petersburg has not only been continued, but emphasized, under the Union from Moscow, by dividing its possessions into two halves of uneven size; the northern half, constituted as the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic, covering very much the same lands as did the Tsarist empire at the date of the sale of Alaska. The other ten Soviet Republics are made up of lands which were either outposts of Russian rule at that time, or subsequent annexations. Those on either side of the Caspian Sea represent countries

into which the Russians of the nineteenth century found themselves, or thought themselves, forced to advance in order to secure possessions which they already possessed. The Union has found the same necessity, or strategy, an obligation which it has been forced to undertake likewise, with the difference that the obligation is a twofold one in this latter case, not merely a military-geographical obligation, but as a matter of prestige, in order that the world should not think of the Union as a lesser Power than was Russia under the Tsars. All the planning and efforts of the last twenty years have more or less hinged on the desire and intention of not being content with narrower boundaries, nor fewer 'protectorates', than existed under their predecessors.

This continuity of policy has been twice reinforced by losses in Europe stimulating the idea and the desire of obtaining compensation for such losses by means of a greater hold in Asia. It happened to the Imperial régime at the time of what we know as the 'Crimean' War, but which was, in fact, waged as much in the Pacific as in the Black Sea. The defeat in the latter was balanced by complete victory in the Pacific, thanks to the Governor-General Muraviev, one of the world's great empire-builders, to whom and to whose disciples it is due that exploration and consolidation in the Far East forged ahead, including the foundation of Vladivostock and much else: enough to make a difference to all succeeding generations. A similar idea and desire ensued after the Bolsheviks came into power and found themselves saddled with many losses in Europe that were irrecoverable for the time being.

But latterly it has been on Central Asia, rather than the Far East, that the efforts in Asia chiefly focused; direct efforts, at any rate.

Little has been said here hitherto about Central Asia. And, in fact, there is little to add. There was nothing there

for Muscovites to discover that was not known before their time, except resources which could not be utilized before the advent of modern science. The record, therefore, of the attempts, and ultimate success, of Russians, in the direction of control is but one more record of the bloodshed and intrigue and futile destruction that constitute historians' history. It is therefore out of place, and that three times over, to speak of that record here: first, because more than enough has been written about it by others; secondly, because the geographical aspect has been dealt with in the previous chapter; and thirdly, because it is time that these things were recognized to be negative, things that can be taken for granted as having happened but which, in themselves, are no more than so many hindrances to the growth of what is worth fostering or listening to. All this was nothing new, either; the peoples had suffered under these habits, and practised them, time out of mind; and the future is likely to repeat the past, world without end, for all that anyone can foresee. The best comment on the whole process is that within the last fifteen years, nomads were to be found who had no idea that the lands they wandered over had ever been appropriated by the Tsar, or were now appropriated by the Union.

As to Siberia and the Farthest East the case is otherwise. It was as much a new world as any other 'New World.' Discoveries were made: colonization took place.

The fur-trade has been referred to; from about 1830 onwards the fur-trade dwindled to about its present proportions, a trade among other trades, by reason of the extent to which extermination of the animals had been carried; and the Gold Rush began. Even in Peter the Great's reign minerals were beginning to compete in importance with the fur-trade: and, generally, it may be said that most of the present-day developments in prospecting and exploiting

which are claimed as achievements achieved under, and because of, the present system of government, are to be found in an experimental stage, at least, during the nineteenth century. Of the Siberian gold rush there is not anything to be said except that it happened, and unfortunately resembled other early gold rushes. It attracted what Semionov calls the 'unknown soldiers' of the movement, who dug and dug and dug and refused to despair and died dreaming of finding what some, in actual fact, did find — some lucky strike of bullion in bulk. And then there were the heroes of the movement, those who realized, as in other gold-rushes, that the best place to prospect for gold is in other people's pockets. Most of the money made out of Siberian mining was made by those who never saw a Siberian, or any other, mine; but bought and sold worthless land at fabulous profits.

However, people came. And some stayed. That was one item in the colonization process. Others went to Siberia because they were sent there, and it is that aspect of the colonization of Siberia that is best known. At the same time, there are misunderstandings enough prevalent about it to make re-statement worth while: the more so since the residue left by the exile-system and its relation to the rest of the population are constituent of Siberia as it is and thereby factors in the future which will have to be taken into account by whatever form of government may exist in Moscow, or elsewhere.

As a practice, transportation to Siberia for offences against the law began in the seventeenth century: as a system, it belongs to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As a system, therefore, it is contemporaneous with the English transportation system to North America and to Australasia. But there was a difference. Russian convicts were never sold into slavery as Englishmen were by Englishmen; especially in Virginia and Maryland where the deportees fetched

higher prices than elsewhere. The Russian government was the only one in the world, except the Spanish, which never officially sanctioned slavery in its colonies. This was not for want of being asked: would-be employers in Siberia often agitated for it. But they were not listened to. Naturally, the distinction between forced labour, etc., and slavery was a fine one. But then distinctions between slavery and conditions that actually prevail, and between official sanctions and connivance, are always fine ones.

When slavery had been abolished in England according to the law, villagers were still being bought and sold with their village in Great Britain with legal obligation on the part of the villagers to remain in their village. That was within the lifetimes of some of our grandfathers; as is clear from Hugh Miller's *My Schools and Schoolmasters* (Chapter XIV).

These facts need to be put clearly because school-histories, and even self-respecting historians, suppress them in this country and they need to be kept in mind in order to see things in perspective. It was the way of the world; and it still is. Such systems existed because they were cheap. The other inhabitants protested, in all cases, that they objected to convict-settlers, but the protests only received attention when the authorities could increase their revenues sufficiently to build prison-walls within which they could leave offenders to corrupt in idleness instead of leaving it to the vast distances, provided by Nature for nothing, to keep such people at a safe distance. More is heard about Siberia for several other reasons. One is that amongst those sent thither were many gifted persons who committed vivid accounts to print; whereas our victims were comparatively inarticulate. Another is that the climate was a terror to those unused to it, whereas the climates of Virginia, Maryland, and Australasia did not constitute a grievance in themselves; rather the reverse. A third reason is that the system of chaining con-

victs to each other on board our ships could be, and was, more lenient than that which was necessary on the Russian land-journeys. Further, those who died on board ship were thrown overboard; those who died dragging themselves along the Siberian tracks were buried by the roadside, and the mounds above their bones have always been visible; and still are. If the bones of the 'convicts' thrown overboard by our ancestors were visible above the waves on the trans-atlantic route, whether from the west coasts of Africa or of England, or on the way to Australia via the Cape, they would not be so quietly forgotten.

How many, in either case, were innocent or guilty from a present-day point of view is beside the point here. But assuredly there were a large proportion of irrepressible persons who provided better material for a pioneering environment than for a more conservative state of society. But there was more than conservatism at work in many instances in Moscow. Among the first exiles to Siberia were criminals who, after being first warned, then whipped, then tortured, to break them of their habit of tobacco-smoking, could only be removed from Europe. Card-playing, using reins in driving horses, letting one's house catch fire through carelessness, also qualified sinners for such sentences. Under Paul I, a contemporary of Napoleon, soldiers were so frequently sent straight off to Siberia from the parade-ground for slight errors in drill that officers took to attending parades with enough money in their pockets to ease the journey. But, after all, what gave the character in the main to the movement, and what has affected the population of Siberia, was that most of the offenders offended by inciting to discontent under conditions when no decent or intelligent person could remain content. A by-product thereof was that exiles were only regarded as criminals by the lawyers, and not regularly even by them; in their place of exile they were

only regarded and treated as inferiors when they misbehaved. Many, too, were prisoners of war, Swedes, Poles, etc., adding to the mixture of races which characterized the whole ethnological texture of Muscovite, Russian, and Siberian development. Impossible as it is to find purity of race anywhere outside literature, the racial basis is heterogeneous to the last degree in the homelands, as in the outer 'republics', of the Union. But what is, no doubt, the best guide to enable an outsider to form an opinion as to the various strains which go to constitute the population of Siberia is that, according to those who are best able to say, the Russian accent prevalent in Siberia is that of Novgorod. That is to say, the exiles and descendants of exiles never have at any time been the chief factor in the growth of the country. It has to be remembered that most of the exiles were men and that, contrary to modern prison-theory, it was recognized that they were human and needed women. At times exiles were under orders to take a wife each along with them, but for the most part they were expected to take wives from the peasantry; in fact, for long the law laid down that no peasant was to marry off any daughter of his to anyone else than an exile. And when a man's sentence was finished he had the option of receiving a grant of land and some money and remaining there; an option all the more frequently taken up inasmuch as the sentence of exile carried with it confiscation of property, and if a man returned he would be dependent on the charity of his 'heirs.' In 1807 colonization went much farther under the care of a man who, while ultra-loyal and a bitter reviler of the French Revolution, was filled full of kindred ideas and wished to convert Siberia into a Utopia. He was not governor of Siberia; the governor was a German who had accepted the post on condition he might live at St. Petersburg. This Russian deputy was what we should call Communistic. He 'collectivized' and organized so obviously

and so totally for the benefit of 100 per cent. of the community that anyone who was recalcitrant against all this reasonableness had to be brought to more reason with the persuasions of soldiers and whips. Soldiers and whips were provided and the plan went forward until the organizer had to be taken charge of by the police for criminal misbehaviour. The mention of soldiers may serve as a reminder that exiles called for garrisons, and garrisons for means of subsistence, subsistence for agriculturists: altogether there were so many reasons why the free population of Siberia should exceed the number of prisoners many times over. And then there were the natives, whose numbers were unknown; and, with all respect to the census, are still unknown. Many of all classes, bond and free, intermarried with these natives. Lobanov-Rostovsky denies this; but flatly contradictory evidence as between those who know most of Russian affairs is the rule rather than otherwise, and there is much in Lobanov-Rostovsky that is difficult to accept.

The above proviso leaves one free, anyway, to sum up more dogmatically than would be voluntary if one did not know that contradiction on Soviet affairs comes instantaneously on all points from all quarters, well-informed and otherwise. As follows: — the air of Moscow made the Muscovites, the Muscovites' qualities enlisted and, it may be, created the Russians: the qualities of the Russians enlisted the Cossacks; and Russians and Cossacks combined proved irresistible, in the end, along the lines that made the Russian Empire. The Union has proved strong enough to take over most of that inheritance, and is increasing in strength. What they and we and everyone else are liable to take for granted is the Trans-Siberian Railway. The Suez Canal and the Panama Canal are ever before us as examples of what human beings can do for humanity, and did do in the nineteenth century. The Russians did no less in planning and complet-

ing that railway. It creates a backbone for the most tremendous of land-areas: one which, previously, was without form and void. Their other railways, existent or planned, would be meaningless without that unifying line which is a symbol of the continuity of Russian effort under the past, present, and whatever future rulers there may be.

CHAPTER III

WHAT EVIDENCE IS THERE?

IT WILL BE CLEAR BY NOW THAT THIS SUBJECT IS TOO VAST for an introduction to it to be attempted in a single volume. This book attempts no such thing. Its aim is to provide an introduction to the current literature of the subject for those who are too busy to provide one for themselves and who, at the same time, wish to get authentic knowledge about it, so far as possible. For the most part it is not possible: that limitation must be recognized. But during the last fifteen years the hold of the Union on parts of Asia has become fastened, and many changes have been introduced; and those indicative of more to come. A sort of stock-taking of the achievements, failures, and tendencies of this fifteen-year period is possible.

On the other hand, there is a large class of book-buyers and book-borrowers which feels that the Union is more of a puzzle than it need be, and to this class is this book addressed. This chapter, then, will consist of characterizations of publications which seem to be acceptable as authentic evidence: characterizations which, it is hoped, may prove of use in selecting or discarding other and future books on the same subject. The remaining chapters will summarize what evidence the above-mentioned material, and much other material of the same kind, supply; and likewise deductions which arise out of it. Experts, naturally, will be inclined to dismiss such an attempt as inevitably a string of insufferable platitudes, but detail has here been collected from so many sources, and such diverse ones, that it may well be that here and there something new even to them too

may crop up. No one, at the present time, can hope to keep abreast of all that is published, even on the subjects he makes himself most familiar with. On the other hand, all that is said here is subject to correction to an even greater extent than is the case with any general survey, by reason of the exceptional complexity and uncertainties inherent in this particular survey, as well as the divergent preconceptions which all and sundry bring along with them in regard to anything labelled as Communistic.

When we look for something worth reading about a foreign country, what kind of a person would we like the writer to be? Certainly, a man or woman with breadth and depth and humanity, an intelligent and clear head, observant, fair-minded, familiar with the languages spoken in that country, preferably long resident there, and having earned a living there too, because only under such conditions can an observer enter into the feelings and necessities of its inhabitants. There is naturally no such book about Soviet Asia as a whole; the area is too vast and too varied. But also, there is no such book about any section of it, as it exists at present, in English. It might be said, with approximate accuracy, that there is nothing considerable of the kind to be had in any Western European language: that no native has told us about it, nor any foreigner, either, with an acquaintance with Asiatic languages: that, in fact, Soviet Asia of to-day is silent, so far as we Europeans are concerned. But this, as will be seen later, is subject to some qualification; and Russian is known to a large minority and is the mother-tongue of many. Yet anyone speaking Russian is an alien belonging to a conquering race in the eyes of a majority, suspect by the mere fact of his speaking Russian; if he is going to gain the confidence of a native, he must live

amongst them for long enough to have lived that handicap down. A few such cases are to be found amongst present-day writers: but in most cases they do not write in English and usually have not been translated. Moreover, taking these writers at their best, it still has to be remembered that changes are taking place so rapidly in Asia nowadays that the best of books become partly out of date by the time of publication, that we have to be continually suspending judgement when we would like to be coming to conclusions, and that we must be equally ready to disbelieve in what is plausible and to believe in fantastic possibilities. This means too rarefied an air for most of the public to breathe: it makes for a simpler life to pick up the first bundle of journalism in a cloth binding that comes handy and to adopt the usual criterion:

> 'For grade and quality let fools contest;
> Whatever is best advertised is best.'

And even if one goes to the public library and asks for something really reliable, the first recommendation is likely to be L. Dudley Stamp's *Asia*, the first edition of 1929, which runs to over 700 pages, but contains only 37 concerning the whole of the Russian dominions, little more than twice as much as are given to the single small island of Ceylon; and those few pages do not deal with anything later than 1917. The latest edition, the third, of 1936, is admittedly little improvement on the first edition. Other stock reference-books will give equally scanty results. And that is a very polite way of putting it.

Putting all that aside, then, and taking into account some considerations which will be mentioned later, no book will be used here which dates farther back than 1934, unless for some special reason. It will be noted that only a small proportion of these sources has been issued by English pub-

lishers; the greater part either come from abroad or occur in some form barely accessible to most people, if it all; very often the knowledge of their existence is by no means easy to come by. Furthermore, all the more important of these sources draw on other sources which, in many cases, may not be available, or not known, even to specialists.

Writers who call for attention fall into three classes: I — Research-workers; II — Residents; III — Visitors. The two latter classes supplement the more comprehensive knowledge of the first class by speaking from a more intimate point of view: but the most valuable of the research-workers often possess as much personal knowledge as any of the book-writing residents or visitors. Taken all together, there exists plenty of evidence as to the changes that have taken place during the past fifteen years; not more than a tiny percentage of the evidence which we need, of course; but enough to present a picture of the general drift of things and some detail. Yet in order to make use of the picture it is necessary to emphasize the conditions under which that picture must perforce be drawn. During the past fifteen years novel ideas and practices have been introduced thither on a scale and with a rapidity for which it would be hard to find a parallel: hard, because it is practicable now to introduce rapid changes more rapidly that at any former time. These ideas, these practices, this scale, this rapidity, have first to dawn on outsiders and insiders, then to be observed by some of them, then to be recorded: and such processes are all the more difficult of accomplishment inasmuch as they have been throughout, and still are, controversial. Refusal to grant facilities for observation, camouflage, propaganda, preconceptions, are all at work to upset the most honest and acute observer's observations, both in print and on the spot. Then, too, the realities and the effects, ultimate and immediate, would be impossible to gauge even in the most circum-

scribed area, whereas the actual area is vaster than anyone could observe in a lifetime, even if conditions were remaining unchanged. Added to that, there are at least 130 languages to learn before one can ascertain what all the natives think, even when they are willing to tell it: and if the observer wishes to be allowed to return to see more, he must be careful what he commits to print.

As regards other books worth consideration, or giving that impression at first sight, it needs to be said that all those books listed as 'Research-work' contain bibliographies which include practically everything worth consideration up to their dates of publication. All those they specify have been utilized here in so far as they are available and to the point, and a separate index to this book gathers in all the scattered references used in addition to the above. These bibliographical lists, taken together, serve a further purpose, namely, if they are compared with the little lists termed 'bibliographies' which are added to books classed under 'Visitors' they will show up how little equipment these visitors think sufficient in the way of knowledge and mental training.

RESEARCH-WORKERS

V. Conolly: *Soviet Trade from the Pacific to the Levant.* 1935.
F. W. Halle: *Women in the Soviet East.* 1938.
L. E. Hubbard: *Soviet Trade and Distribution.* 1938.
Soviet Money and Finance. 1936.
The Economics of Soviet Agriculture. 1939.
Waldemar Jochelson: *Peoples of Asiatic Russia.* (American Museum of Natural History.) 1928.
Marc Slonim: *Les onze républiques soviétiques.* 1937.
Charles Steber: *La Sibérie et l'extrême nord soviétique.* 1936.
L'Asie centrale soviétique et le Kazakhstan. 1939.
T. A. Taracouzio: *Soviets in the Arctic.* New York. 1938.

V. CONOLLY. A continuation of an earlier study, *Soviet Economic Policy in the East* (1933). Both are supplemented by a more personal record, *Soviet Tempo* (1938). All are most useful. Briefer than anyone else, the author puts more, in effect, before the reader, within the limits of her scope, than any other. More judgement is brought to bear in thinking out and in phrasing: still more, she knows better than others working in Europe where to find material and how to use it; and she goes there and uses it. Her bibliographical work is the best there is for anyone to start upon who wishes to go beyond what is here provided; references to valuable sources to be found in the other research-workers' books, above-mentioned, are best used as supplementary to Miss Conolly's.

F. W. HALLE. An Austrian who had already written a book on Women in Russia (*Die Frau in Sowietrussland*, 1932) and has therefore a good basis for extending her studies to the Asiatic lands. The writer is no eulogist, and, while granted full facilities by the Union authorities, is not hampered by them. She has spared no trouble in journeys far and wide, in breadth and depth of study, and has made the most of both by being the kind of person who gains the confidence of strangers quickly. While primarily research, the book is done with so much humanity and sense as to be as much literature as research, and the English translation is so excellent as to render it as much English literature as German. The photographs, index, glossary, etc., are all of more than customary value.

L. E. HUBBARD. Careful examinations based not only on recent visits to Russia, and utilization of official documents and private information, but also with a background of thirty years' experience of European Russia and a family connection going back for a century. Two limitations have to be borne in mind, however; one is that the titles are misleading;

some term like 'Legislation' should have been included, since the volumes only deal with the formal aspects; and secondly, their bearing on Asia is indirect.

WALDEMAR JOCHELSON. An exceedingly thorough compilation, combining diligence, travel, and a sense of criticism to a rare degree. As, for instance, 'The Persians appear to be rather homogeneous. However, our knowledge of the physical anthropology of Persia is still extremely limited. Of its ten million inhabitants hardly thirty individuals have been measured and no authentic Persian skulls are as yet available in our scientific collections.' This frame of mind enables us to accept much more from him without verification than we otherwise could: fortunately for us, since his researches extend into much where we can neither hope to follow nor find anyone who can act as a check on them. Moreover, his is one of those cases where we should be glad if the author had spoken more personally, since we are left in doubt as to how far his travels in these regions and his acquaintance with native languages have gone. The inferences from this and other writings of his suggest that the more we knew the greater confidence we should feel. Here, too, is one of the cases where a book issued in 1928 has much to say that is up to date, and likely to remain so.

MARC SLONIM. Defines the constituent parts of the U.S.S.R. according to the constitution of 1936. The best one-volume summary; brief, judicial, clear, and detailed without being over-burdened, and providing much from personal acquaintanceship. The more valuable by reason of the author being a Russian who is a humanist and appreciative of traditions and art and human geography.

CHARLES STEBER. These two volumes form the only survey, both so full and so recent, of the Soviet Eastern dominions. The first volume is the better produced and it is clear that Steber would have given us more in the second volume

if he had had the opportunity. He is given to take a certain amount at face-value which is not entitled to be so taken, and tends to contrast strong points of to-day with weak points of the past to a greater extent than we may feel contented to accept. How much of this impression is personal to himself and how much due to conditions he feels bound by, cannot be defined: but it will mainly be due, no doubt, to Steber being primarily of a scientific turn of mind and to Soviet lines of thought and action harmonizing with his own. He and Slonim supplement each other, at any rate. It is clear that Steber has travelled over much of the ground that he covers in his two books, but not clear whether he has acquaintance with languages required beyond Russian. But he, too, does make the impression that the more we came to know of him the more confidence we should feel in him, as speaking in good faith, if not with adequate perspective. The whole is the outcome of tremendous diligence and competence, and of skill in presentation. It must necessarily be the basis of any attempt like the present one to put things as they stand now before the English reader.

T. A. TARACOUZIO. An elaborately produced book and fortunately one possessing an ample index: it is decidedly a book to be read from the index. It comprises much that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to find elsewhere in English, being compiled wholly from Russian sources; yet it would be a far better book if most of the words were left out. Stilted, long-winded and uncritical, its phraseology is so vague that the author may seem to be approving of many claims which cannot be substantiated, to a greater extent than perhaps he means to approve of them. There is nothing in his book to induce us to believe he has ever seen the districts whose present-day conditions he describes, nor that he has used any material other than that which he could obtain in the U.S.A.; and he gives the impression that the

U.S.A. is strangely defective in the opportunities it affords to enquirers as compared with Europe. I have read it all through carefully, but cannot recommend anyone else to do as much, except he be in search of amusement which the author never intended to arouse; what we call 'birds' he calls 'ornithofauna,' and so on. But it needs to be consulted.

RESIDENTS

By residents are meant those who have spent at least several years in Russian territory, earning their living there.

Ammende, Ewald: *Human Life in Russia.* 1936.
Ciliga, A.: *Au pays du grand mensonge.* 1938.
Littlepage, J. D. and D. Bess: *In Search of Soviet Gold.* 1939.
Tchernavin, V. V.: *I Speak for the Silent.* 1935.
Tchokaieff, M. A. : *Fifteen Years of Bolshevik Rule in Turkestan,* in *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society.* 1933.

EWALD AMMENDE. An Estonian who had visited most parts of the Russian Empire before 1918 and in that year, when his country had gained independence, was appointed to negotiate with the Bolshevik authorities about food-supplies. In the course of travelling about Russia for this purpose, he foresaw famines and spent the rest of his life trying to remedy and prevent them. After appealing in vain to the philanthropists and philanthropic institutions, he died prematurely of over-work consequent on these efforts of his. His book is based mainly on reports in the Soviet Press, confirmed by first-hand experience of his own and of persons he knew. He has no use for foreign journalists, nor for books, with rare exceptions; nor for statistics. Another example of a book which is concerned with European Russia alone, but which has a bearing on events in Asian Russia.

A. CILIGA. A Croat who became converted to Communism when a student at 18. Took an active part in the movement in Yugoslavia and studied at Prague, Vienna and Zagreb; was expelled from Yugoslavia in 1925 and had come to the conclusion that the movement was not being true to itself in Europe. He therefore decided to go to the fountain-head to be fortified in the true gospel and in the practice thereof, but had a shock when he arrived in Moscow and could not get such a thing as a taxi, but had to put up with a shabby old cab and a shabby old cabby who said, 'Ah! you come from America I suppose! Good life there, eh? Buy what you want: Good stuff and cheap? Not that way here; rotten stuff and pay its weight in gold for it. . . .' After a life full of similar shocks he attempted to set Russia also on the right road and was taken charge of by the Ogpu from 1930 to 1935, acquiring thereby experience of Siberian convict-life which supplements the commentaries of Littlepage and Tchernavin (q.v.). Beyond that his book has much typical significance on account of his age. Wherever he would have been during those years, would he not have been shedding illusions? Does not the whole process of education consist in getting rid of those illusions which constitute truth for other people and acquiring those illusions which constitute truth for us? And how can we expect to free ourselves from the combined undue pressure of home, school, university, and environment before the age of 40? It illustrates the difficulties that arise between Communism and Communists, between the old and the new — in fact, of all growing-pains. Theories that he was concerned with were incessantly metamorphosizing themselves, and daily life had to adjust itself, too, amidst all the discomforts and bitterness of states of flux. Ciliga's experiences provide no means of coming to any conclusions about the past, present, or future of optimistic theories: rather do they reflect the transitions incidental

to the ages of 18–40, of exchanging rose-pink for drab under conditions which allow no one to see more than the drabness of the drab side of life. A most sincere, authentic, wrong-headed book which brings out all the sadness inherent in trying to see straight in a crooked world. An English version is now obtainable.

J. D. LITTLEPAGE. Littlepage was a North American engineer who worked for the Gold Trust, 1928–37. The account has been written up by a publicity-man, but does not seem to have suffered much in the process. Littlepage talks straight about those things which came under his notice in connection with his work: he learnt Russian in order to deal direct with the workmen under him. Clear in comment and narrative, fair-minded, level-headed and shrewd, welcome to the authorities as giving good value for his salary, working all the time as right-hand man of one of the most able and admirable of contemporary industrialists, Serebrovsky, the head of the Gold Trust — Littlepage gained an intimate knowledge during a period when typical changes took place. He was fortunate in going there when much that is now swept away was still going on in the same old way, and in remaining there long enough to see the new methods tried out and defects rectified: we are fortunate, too, in having the evidence of a man who started as free of preconceptions as well could be, and who has no mercy on any preconceptions, either his own or anyone else's.

'My knowledge of Soviet Russia in that period (1927) was practically nil. I had glanced through newspaper articles, but it seemed such a confused sort of place that I gave up reading about it. . . . Before I went to Russia . . . I was disposed to believe that the whole country and everything in it was a lunatic asylum and I let it go at that.'

Fortunately his subsequent acquaintance with his countrymen, both in Russia and at home, impressed on him that they too knew no more about it than he once did; he therefore dictates his account, so to speak, from the bottom up, but without wasting words: consequently, for anyone who is embarking on the subject of modern Russian experiment, this book contains more of value than is probably to be found within any other one book.

V. V. TCHERNAVIN. Another example of experience in Europe only which has a wider bearing, all the more so in this case since the author had previously had more than ordinary experience of Asia also. In other ways, too, typical of those older men of first-rate capacities who were maturing when the Revolution broke out and had to decide whether they would go on making the most of what they had learnt already in the places they knew best, and using the language they knew best, or whether they would exile themselves, with all the known and unknown drawbacks of starting life all over again abroad. Tchernavin's father belonged to the nobility, but had left the boy a pauper-orphan at 15 with four younger brothers and an elder sister. He quickly got taken on exploring expeditions in the Altaï region and Mongolia and soon became leader in expeditions in equally out-of-the-way parts. In 1925 he was attracted to Murmansk, his imagination fired by the spirit of enterprise prevailing then; specially to Murmansk itself by reason of the novelty of development of a fishing industry in those seas on a scale undreamt-of hitherto. It all came true, too; too true: for its success brought it overmuch into notice with the Government. In the end Tchnernavin came under control of the Ogpu and was sent back thither to make himself useful as a convict-employee. He continued to work as the born scientist that he was, but also utilized the nearness to the frontier, and the freedom given him to explore, in order

to escape. His work is one of the many by those who speak of the seamiest side of Soviet rule from more or less first-hand experience. There are many such books and so much in them that is, to say the least, misleading, that it is a puzzle whether they can be used at all. Tchernavin is a more reliable witness than most; perhaps than any. His book is all of a piece; ability and sense are as clear in it as suffering; and his detailed record of the Ogpu's business-methods forms relevant evidence as to the conditions under which Soviet commerce was carried on during the period we are concerned with. Equally remarkable and typical is it of what must always be taken into account in dealing with Russian activities—a percentage, a larger percentage, probably, than in most countries of men of outstanding intelligence, endurance, and initiative, thrown up out of a population of 170 millions and set the problem of how far they can and will find scope for their gifts and desires, under heart-breaking conditions, coupled with never-dying hope that, as changes have taken place in the past, a turn for the better will come in the end, and, they may hope, not too late: and in any case there is work to be done for science and for their country and for humanity which is not theirs to waste. It is characteristic of the whole subject of Russia, whether European or Asiatic, that this question, which lies in wait for everyone concerned with the humanities, is put in a more intense form to Russians than to most others.

M. A. TCHOKAIEFF. Exceptional and useful in that he is a native of Turkestan who remembers his land under the Tsars, besides what he has learnt from others who lived there too, and also under the Soviet. His is one of the rare cases where we can listen to one to whom the language of the people concerned is familiar, and their thoughts. He has not got much to say in favour of either system.

VISITORS

Gruber, Ruth: *I Went to the Arctic.* 1939.
Hudson, A. E.: *Kazak Social Structure*; Yale University Publication in Anthropology. 1938.
Maillart, E. K.: *Turkestan Solo*; translation of *Des Monts célestes aux sables rouges*; both 1934.
Pilniak, Boris: *La septième république.* 1931.
Y. Z.: *From Moscow to Samarkand.* 1934.

Visitors to Soviet Asia tend to be confined to one season of one year. They naturally are not strong in perspective or background, but need not be so weak in these respects as visitors mostly are. All of these claim acquaintance with Russian, and recall detail which sometimes fits in as complementary to the observation of those better equipped. Where they fail unnecessarily is in straining themselves to give greater plausibility to their recollections than can be credited; as in repeating conversations word for word, generalizing from isolated impressions, and so on. Pilniak and Y. Z. are the best.

RUTH GRUBER. Went to Igarka for a hasty visit in 1935, travelling by aeroplane thither and returning by boat to Murmansk. A book with marked defects and qualities; but it happens that the qualities are the more marked of the two, provided it is considered as a supplementary source. An example of what is often notable — how people will usually talk more freely to a woman-foreigner than to a man. She was not taken very seriously and could not be; but she was welcome, and reflects the strong points of both Arctic and Soviet life, the spirit of the thing, as brightly as anyone and better than most. Since she had a special interest in woman's life in the Arctic, the book has a twofold application.

A. E. HUDSON. Spent July–October 1936 at Alma-Ata and near by — no further because his permit limited him to that. His enquiries were concerned with Kazak custom as it existed in the middle of the last century. He drew his information from one old man to whom he could not talk directly; using an interpreter, a young man, who interpreted in the light of Communist doctrine. Imagine a Kazak coming to Leeds and getting information about all nineteenth-century England — all of it — from the oldest inhabitant who could only talk broad Yorkshire through the medium of a young man who was only accustomed to think along the lines of our weekly papers!

These two witnesses contradict themselves and each other, and the inferences are transferred into the phraseology of academic ethnology. When he gets away from this he further shakes our confidence by writing 'complied' for 'compiled' and 'financée' for 'fiancée.' This is called 'field-work' in North America. Some detail in the text and some of the many entries in the bibliography may be useful to specialists. It is also typical of one species of book, of a kind easily overlooked.

E. K. MAILLART. Swiss. Her record is of a six-months' journey, at first in company with Russians, and later alone. Determined, eager, tremendously strong; much attracted by beauty of colouring, but always being deflected into the superficial and sensational through want of mental training and education to a degree strange in a Swiss girl. Tactless, overbearing, and callous, always in a hurry, leaving behind her a trail of contempt and dislike for the foreigner which other foreigners will have to encounter. It is noteworthy that in the photographs which she has taken of people (regardless of whether they are willing to be photographed of not) all the faces are sullen or suspicious. It is worth while comparing her photos with the ever-smiling persons

in E. O. Lorimer's *Language-hunting in the Karakoram*; this will show up what value is to be attached to her evidence.

BORIS PILNIAK. A Russian's first visit to Tadjikistan (1930). Vivid and sensible: good story-telling without overdoing it. Has experience as a traveller from Palestine to Spitzbergen. There is pleasure and profit in seeing with his eyes, hearing with his ears, thinking his thoughts, and making acquaintance with the many new friends he made, and with his own personality.

Y. Z. Another single journey by a Russian: also easy to read, unpretentious, attractive and worth-while. Also a traveller: he can make comparisons with India and with that best of all towns for comparative purposes, Palermo.

Two other visitors' books to be recommended are:

GUSTAV KRIST: *Alone through the Forbidden Land.* 1938
ROSITA FORBES: *Forbidden Road.* 1937

both of them refreshing, illuminating, and both authors born travellers.

As to what the evidence provided by such books may be expected to yield, we need to take into account some general factors.

There is as much variety, as big a scale, as violent contrasts, in the human affairs of the Union as in its geography and history. All are accentuated by the way the Union authorities speak and write. A burning enthusiasm for the future of humanity, still flaming amidst many Russian enthusiasts, is combined with the profoundest contempt, on the part of the rulers, for the mentality of humanity as it is to-day. It is a pity: it is carried too far, at any rate so far as we are concerned: they stand in their own light. No doubt that attitude may be justifiable as far as the majority of English-speaking listeners and readers are concerned — certainly the Soviet authorities have been given good reason for thinking

so — but there is another kind of public, in England, at any rate, which is ready to appreciate achievements on their merits but has some sense of criticism and intends to keep it. We, too, have a country which likewise is a playground for orators, and this section of the public is not deceived — not often, and not for long — by mere talk. Within the Union there is tragedy and adventure, success and failure; and much of a Gilbert-and-Sullivan order. But with the evidence at present available, it is frankly impossible to estimate when and where the right spots occur for sympathy, sorrow, admiration, and irony. And the chief hindrance comes from Moscow itself and its amazing effrontery and unreliability.

At least, that is how it strikes us. It may be equally accurate, more accurate, to ascribe the origin of our impressions to an over-confidence and high spirits due to that stimulating quality of the air of Moscow which has been in creative operation for four centuries. If there is one thing above others that is outside the reach of human beings, is it not the capacity to make allowances for the physical peculiarities of others and the effect of those peculiarities on their behaviour? Yet if such allowances could be made, there is a special place for it as between English and Russians. There is nothing that is authentically Russian that does not strike us as a little crazy, and nothing that is authentically English that does not strike all foreigners as crazy. Is it not the case that what wants doing in order to bring about a better understanding is to transpose both mentalities into different keys, so to speak, so as to make allowances for the contrasts in climates and their effects? They are dominated by the severity and sharpness of a land climate and we by the mildness of sea-atmosphere. Once such allowances have been made, the back-streets and municipal finance of the 'provinces' in the Union and in the United Kingdom

take on a strangely kindred aspect; and so with much else.

STATISTICS

The Union authorities being so profoundly convinced of the gullibility of human nature, and especially of that sort of human nature which speaks some sort of English, they use statistics as a weapon. Everybody knows that. But they do more than use it: they brandish it. An exceedingly intelligent people, they exuberate in the effects that can be produced by manipulating statistics virtuoso-fashion, to an extent which deceives no one in their own country who does not want to be deceived and is very amusing; all the more so since virtuoso-display is more in place there, to an artistic mind, than in the concert-hall. No one can attend to Soviet statistics for long without finding this or that expert, or Government department, issuing two irreconcilable sets of statistics on the same subject. Here is one instance. When the Union was negotiating for the sale of the Chinese Eastern Railway in 1933 two official versions of the traffic on the railway were printed; one set of figures showed up half the profit that the other set showed up. But both showed up good commercial results in spite of a record (printed in the paper which showed up the higher ratio of profit) of 38 armed attacks on trains, 10 acts of incendiarism, 197 attacks on officials, 60 murders, 97 wounded, 400 imprisoned (Conolly, 86–7). Another form taken may be exemplified by: 'the total stock of fish in Barents Sea is not less than 5,000,000 tons in its southern part.' This quotation is from Taracouzio, who often quotes similar 'estimates' as acceptable, and will add that 'these figures speak for themselves.' But much more trustworthy authors quote hypothetical figures as fact. They have no bearing on the present or future of the country concerned otherwise than that large quantities of, say, coal, are believed to exist in such and such

a district, large enough to promise a satisfactory return for time and money if other conditions favouring production are forthcoming. The 'estimate,' in fact, would be much more mathematical if it were put in algebraical form, as 'x', especially as, in practically every case in Soviet Asia, conditions favouring production have first got to be built up from the bottom. And that would imply taking labour, material, and capital away from producing that product, or some other product, elsewhere.

Practices like these pass current in all economic work, so much so that it may seem waste of time to comment on them. But since the aim here is to get into touch with realities, and that amidst endless hindrances, it is necessary to put in a few plain words in order that the whole result may not get out of gear. It is not only in the Union, but everywhere, that statistics consist of statements that are unverified and unverifiable, in almost all cases, so far as a research-worker is concerned; presumption is usually against the likelihood of their being exact, and, in any case, in all cases, the significance of them hinges on interpretation to such an extent that it is, finally, the interpretation that matters and not the figures. It is a convention with economists that in order to be precise you must quote figures; but the fact is that the more precise an economist endeavours to become, the more inaccurate he grows. The convention is only kept up because the standard for economic writing is so low, and it is low because shallow conventional thinking and the desire to make money out of text-books make it so. What will pass and can most easily be memorized for examination-purposes sets the standard, and a writer on the subject must normally conform, consciously or unconsciously, to these low standards; otherwise his work will not be published. The result is that economists' statistics usually have no more connection with reality than the Catechism.

Nevertheless, there are grades of applicability, and something must be done towards sorting these out. When the sorting is over, we shall be on the way towards something which, if not satisfying, may have some plausibility, or even reasonableness, about it. That is the utmost we can hope for.

A first step towards that end is to differentiate between what is a self-respecting unit and what is not. A ton is a ton, a yard a yard, all over the world, and once for all: an equivalent can be worked out where different weights and measures are in force. But that is not the case with a coin; least of all with the rouble. Here is a case where the visitors come in useful; that is, when they speak of what they got for their money in set cases. One man speaks of eating an ordinary meal, made up of such stuff as people ordinarily ate in the part he was, and of paying the equivalent of five pounds for it, reckoning according to the official rate of exchange. Another variation is that the actual rate of exchange varies according to how near the place is to a frontier; as much as 75 per cent higher rate will be offered when the money is likely to be useful for escape-purposes. Then again, the two chief private trading-companies during this period, the Ogpu and the Gold Trust, would not accept Government-money at their shops; each had its own currencies and would sell for none but those. Then also, up to 1936, there were the Government 'Torgsin' shops and these too would not accept roubles (for reasons which it will be more appropriate to give later on). During part of this period, moreover, the chervonetz was the Government currency and the rouble was merely a coin-of-account; in which latter, nevertheless, statistics were issued. All economists accept statistics over these periods, that is, those of the old rouble, the chervonetz, and the new rouble of 1936, in roubles. What results show up under these methods? One example will do; one from the figures which are reckoned as amongst the most reliable,

those issued by the League of Nations, in its Yearbook. Exports of timber for 1935–7 quadrupled in value during this period but decreased by one-third in weight. Price-fluctuations do not account for variations on that scale. At first sight it seems practicable to check variations by taking the figures of the importing countries and thereby ascertaining at least some midway-figures which will give us a rough idea of the trend: imports of timber into Japan from the Union, for instance. But when the value is shown in yen the alterations in the value of the yen have to be taken into account and the relations between the real and official values of the rouble and chervonetz are thereby further complicated instead of simplified. Throughout this period of fifteen years all the currencies of all countries have been depreciating, but at different rates in each country. Calculating values in terms of money therefore becomes the usual economists' game played in the usual economists' vacuum.

Again, under State trading retail prices are arbitrarily fixed and wholesale prices do not exist. Consequently no test of the value of currency exists. And export prices are not calculated on the basis of costings but according to competitors' prices and political aims (cf. especially Fuad Kazak's *Ostturkistan zwischen der Grossmächten*, 1937). No money-values will therefore be used in this book as evidence.

A few lines, nevertheless, should be given to the Budget; but not many, because the system of accounting is so different in the Union from any other system that no comparisons by figures and appropriations prove valid; and nothing that should be called an audit is permitted in any country. And even if some means could be devised whereby comparisons could be established, they would all fall to the ground once more for the reason that taxation in the Union is paid partly in kind and therefore does not show up in figures. The chief ascertainable difference is that in Western Europe taxation

is assessed mainly on what people earn, and in the Union on what people spend. Three-fifths of the latter's revenue comes from taxation on sales; food being included amongst taxable articles. Also, the Budget report for 1940 shows that uncollected arrears of taxation form a serious deficit each year. This is of interest as comment on the hold the central Government has on its subjects; and, probably, on its tax-collectors. As to the unascertainable elements which invalidate comparisons, these do not only consist in doctrinal and controversial theories on both sides (in the discussion of which the terms and phrases, again on both sides, always connote one thing in theory and another in practice), but also in the rapid evolution which is in progress everywhere; a rapidity which renders a true statement for one year — supposing such a statement can be arrived at — inapplicable to the ensuing year. The nearest conclusion that an English reader can come to which is enlightening may be stated as follows — there is some affinity between the finance of the Union and that of English municipalities; namely, both begin by appropriations of other people's money for some desirable object and so often end in misappropriations of it by undesirable persons.

An outstanding variation of the financial systems of the Union from those of the United Kingdom is that the former allows no competition between itself and other outlets for investment of savings; which is an especially important variation when it comes to the investment-outlets of insurance funds. Also, their systems have not yet been put to the test of war.

As to other figures, similar difficulties arise. Because this or that number of hospitals, or lighthouses, etc., have been erected, it does not follow that they have ever been equipped; or, if equipped, taken into use; or, if taken into use, maintained in use. For want of means to carry on with their

nominal technical uses, they may be in use only as housing for the staff; and so on. Because so many tractors, or other machines, have been delivered, it does not follow that they are being supplied with petrol, etc., to render them workable: still less that they are in repair. The probabilities are against such being the case, as will be made clear later on and the special reason for that probability.

Any figures quoted, therefore, are not put forward here as substantiated, except in so far as reason is produced for accepting them. They are quoted merely as indications, or claims, which probably show the way the tide is flowing, 'strimmage,' as the Thames-side word is, and that when some other evidence is to hand confirming it.

CHAPTER IV

TO-DAY

IN ADDITION TO THE FOUR DISTRICTS TO WHICH ATTENTION will be given, as noted in the first chapter, namely, the basin of the River Lena, Tanna-Tuva, Birobidjan, and Tadjikistan, there are various special activities to which attention may be given, not only for their own sake but as typical of what goes on to-day. One of these is Polar Research, which had better come first, since it is to some extent introductory to details about the Lena area; and then, after the other three districts have taken their share of space, summaries of information collected about Industry, the Anti-God movement, Communications, and Women, will be found to cover as much else as can be packed into a tolerable chapter: enough, it is hoped, to set in relief both efforts of the last fifteen years and the measure of results incidental to them.

POLAR EXPLORATION

All Soviet activities have been, and are, modified by fear: fear of counter-revolution, of enemies abroad, of discontent within. Strategy is therefore a factor in every plan. Most of their realizable valuables are situated uncomfortably near some frontier: only in one case, by the Urals, have they found it practicable to build up resources in a safe place. In Asia, their chief fear now is of Japan. On that frontier it is not only exploitable land that is within a danger-zone, but the Trans-Siberian Railway likewise. When the railway was planned, it was located as far north as might be, sufficiently far north to seem safe, considering how boundaries ran then

and how warfare was being carried on. But since that time the Japanese have encroached further and further: air-raids could nowadays cut off supplies from reaching troops and troops from reaching anywhere. An alternative is to create a Polar Ocean route from the north of Russia to the Pacific. Modern science has rendered that idea less of a dream than it used to be. But in order to realize that dream, much has to happen on land as well as by sea: it implies the industrialization of Siberia, especially of Siberian rivers. Hence the connection between Polar research and changes along the Lena. Hence, too, it comes about that latter-day developments need to be sought for in unlikely quarters. One such is an article from a review published by the Ministry of Marine in Italy (Giorgio Pullé, *Il passaggio del Nordest nella situazione strategica del' U.R.S.S.*; Rivista Marittima, April, 1938). Another is by a German, Hans Rudolphi (*Sowietrussland in Nordasien unter der Arktis*, in *Geographische Zeitschrift*, 1938). A later survey still occurs in the *Geographical Journal* for July 1940, by Prof. K. Mason, while information is kept up to date, to a mild extent, in the Russian Economic Notes issued by the Department of Commerce at Washington twice a month. As to books, a tendency has become manifest of late to popularize events up North: most of its by-products are more popular than Polar. A really sound book, corrective of these popularizers, is Gustav Seidenfaden's *Modern Arctic Exploration*; all the more indispensable in the present case inasmuch as it deals with the subject as a whole, and not with the Soviet side of it exclusively. It is scientific, competent, impartial; well planned, well written, well translated.

Incidental to the establishment of a regular sea-route between the White Sea and the Behring Straits is a whole host of activities. The longest continuous coast-line possessed by any one Power has to be surveyed and mapped; know-

ledge obtained of inlets and islands; meteorology and ice-movements ascertained on a scale and with a thoroughness never even planned hitherto; lighthouses and buoys erected and maintained in working-order, rescue-work provided for, coaling-stations and docks created: together with all the housing, mining, etc., attendant on such enterprises. Little of this is practicable without rendering the rivers navigable and navigated. In this, as in all else, the reader is faced with two versions of what has happened. One is that the enterprises were planned and undertaken for the first time during the past twenty years and are now maturing: the other is that their conception and infancy date back two centuries or more and have gradually been brought, by continuous effort since then, to a later stage of infancy nowadays. The latter will be found the truer version.

The following are some typical incidents and features of Soviet activities in the Arctic.

The chief factor in advance is aviation. Conditions are exceptional, most of the temperatures being below zero. The Union trains a larger number of sub-zero aviators than is at the disposal of any other ruler. These are employed in surveying ice-formations before navigation begins, piloting ships, transporting workmen and materials along the coast and the rivers, provisioning outposts unreachable by any other means, coming to the rescue of casualties and hospital patients; postal and passenger services. Besides such daily personal and commercial aids, expeditions and explorations have been put on an entirely new footing by aviators. Two stories may be summarized by way of exemplifying this new footing. In May 1937 four 'planes were sent off, landed on an ice-floe near the Pole, left four observers there and flew back again. The observers remained on this floe till February 1938, when they were taken off owing to their floe being in the act of breaking up. Nothing of this kind had ever been

attempted before. In 1939 more aviators alighted on another floe, erected an automatic observation-hut and flew back again. Nothing of this kind, either, had ever been attempted before.

Yet while nothing of these kinds could have been attempted except by help of aviation, aviation alone could not usefully have achieved more by itself than proving the feasibility of Polar flights, which was being independently proved in 1937 by the Trans-Polar flight from Moscow to San Francisco. All other incidentals to Polar exploration have equally been metamorphosed by other scientific inventions in just the same degree as means of transport. From the automatic station, mentioned above, no soundings could have been taken under the conditions of the past, when, in succession, soundings were taken, first, by a hempen rope, later by wire cable, later still by bathymeter, and now first by fathometer, which ascertains depths by sound alone through the agency of transmitter and receiver. Radio is another. From that automatic station automatic recordings were transmitted, day by day, keeping mainland operators informed as to the location to which the floe had drifted; as to barometric pressures, air-temperatures, wind-directions, etc. When the operators themselves remain on the floe, as in 1937, radio means still more. It means that the operators no longer have to endure months, perhaps years, of isolation, lacking news of their friends and families, and their families and friends news of them; and no assuredness on either side whether news will ever come. It means that all concerned, explorers with their wives, scientists on shore with scientists at sea, can keep up communications day by day. So much so that one leader at the North Pole received a message by telephone from his little son telling him to be sure to bring back a Polar bear with him.

Investigations into food-values and what can be done

towards preserving them, preserve also the health, strength and spirits of the personnel, who no longer spend time and spoil opportunities by needing to curse all the manufacturers of all the food they have brought. Then there is the question of weight, too. Food for the 1937 expedition, food for thirty-five persons, for eighteen months, weighed little more than 5 tons; all packed in air-tight metal boxes each of which contained rations for twenty-five days and included forty different kinds of food. The intention was that those who were taking the risks these men were taking should be fed as in a good restaurant; and the intention was fulfilled. Scientific reduction of weight entered into all preparations to such effect that the whole equipment weighed 10 tons. Previous expeditions had had to burden themselves with 150 tons. The house on the floe in 1937 had a framework of duralumin, a lining of waterproof rubber, two linings of silk with eiderdown between each; outer layers of canvas. The floor was of inflatable rubber. When seen from a sleeping-bag it seemed a four-room flat with a pink silk aspect: when they were up and about, each of the four rooms had a sunny aspect, there being no other kind at the Pole. By means of wind-motor they had electric light the second day.

All this labour-saving, health-preserving, applied science is most noteworthy for the enablement of observers to devote their time to observing. Under the old-fashioned conditions, explorers had to spend most of their time and energies on manual labour to preserve their lives. With these, the first day they landed they sent out a meteorological report, and four such reports every day thereafter. By the ninth day they were in wireless communication with Hawaii, and at one time were exchanging the longest wireless calls on record; those from an Arctic to an Antarctic expedition. In purer science still, they made the discovery that higher temperatures existed in the water deep down than on the

surface; and the disbelief in the existence of life at the Pole was dispelled on the fifth day by a song-bird, and on the tenth day by crab-catching.

But one factor required of Polar explorers remains unchanged, the factor of the personal qualities needed. These qualities the Russians possess in the highest degree. There is plenty of evidence that the work attracts and enlists the right type of man to fulfil the tremendous and peculiar demands entailed by such work, that the right men are chosen, and that they work as men who have found their place in life and are enjoying both their work and each other's company. A dreadful fact in the previous history of similar expeditions has often been an inability to react against the melancholia which is apt to prevail in the Arctic and which runs counter to the best-laid plans, the best intentions, and the highest intellectual gifts.

All the above-mentioned factors, the applied science in every form, from the invention and perfecting of aeroplanes to the analysis of food-values, from the lessons learnt from previous successes and failures, to the existence of the Russian faculty for using them, all, it may be said, are factors either borrowed or inherited by the promoters of these expeditions. Unless radio, duralumin, etc., had been invented abroad, unless geography, geology, metallurgy, etc., had had the attention abroad that they have had, something would been lacking in the absence whereof the plans could not have been carried out; for the most part, not even been planned. That is true. But the utilization of all this material ready to hand must go to the exclusive credit of the promoters. These promoters were some of them politicians; others scientists. The main mover in it all was Otto Schmidt; a great enthusiast, a great leader, a great scientist. It was due to him and the associates he chose that the expedition of 1937 went off without a hitch, without a casualty, without illness. Nothing

was left to chance. Eighteen months were given to the preparations, and those months but the culmination of years of self-sacrifice and skill devoted beforehand. Every item of the equipment had been made specially. When all was ready, the team spent a week of the Russian winter trying out the equipment, living under the conditions they were to encounter in the Arctic. Each member specialized in some department and taught more or less of his speciality to the others. They took no doctor: one of them spent a year at a medical school as part of his training for the expedition. All their landing and taking-off had to be done on runners, without wheels, often under conditions that verged on suicide; but all without injury. Schmidt is no longer specially concerned with Polar research; but has become head of the Academy of Sciences.

On the political side, the support accorded seems to have been devoid of that half-heartedness which we think of as inseparable from governmental action. While those who went went as adventurers in science, they were sent also to tell the world, to confound doubters, to further strategy. But it must be remembered that they lived up to all expectations, both their own and other people's. Books they took with them they brought back unread: their working-hours were sixteen a day; and they on an island which began by measuring 135 feet by 75, which went on altering its shape and size and place each day until it had drifted 1,250 miles from the starting-point and was cracking across in the middle: not to mention all the bits that had broken off earlier. Even then they refused all outside help from any but their own country, and were only rescued in the nick of time by an ice-breaker blasting its way through the surrounding ice with dynamite.

It is when we come to these ice-breakers that there is a different kind of tale to tell. Up to 1937 the Union pos-

sessed no more ice-breakers than Denmark; and every one of theirs had been built abroad and inherited from the Tsarist Government. The vessel which rescued the men in 1938 had only been completed the previous year, and was the first of the kind to be constructed in Russian or in Soviet territory. A second of this type was launched in 1938: a third is said to be under construction. These three exceed the older types in measurements and in efficiency. They can carry two aeroplanes each.

The record of the older ones, however, is one of hard work. They have acted as laboratories, observatories, training-ships: have been instrumental in making many discoveries; besides their normal task of convoying ships through ice-fields. But only four of them are, strictly speaking, ice-breakers; the rest being designed as ice-cutters only. All have nevertheless done pioneer work in opening up the northern sea-route. Up to 1932 no vessel had made the voyage from Europe to the Pacific by way of the north in a single season. In that year two vessels did that; one voyaging westwards, the other eastwards. In 1939, for the first time in history, a ship made the double journey, i.e., from Murmansk to the Behring Straits and back to Murmansk, within the year. But an effective double-journey needs to be as far as Vladivostock and back. This does not seem to have been effected yet. From 1935 on, merchantmen have been making the single passage in, on the whole, increasing numbers. There is evidence, further, of isolated improvements along the whole route, including establishment of depôts and docks, both on the rivers and at their mouths, frequently being achieved; and increasing safety in navigation. But as to the care with which all this evidence has to be treated, there is this to note — it was claimed that in the year 1939 not a single ship had been caught in the ice; the first year for which such a claim had been put forward. But, in fact, one

of the ice-breakers themselves, which was caught in the ice in 1938, remained there throughout 1939, and did not return home till 1940. Yet it is still part of the programme that the Polar Ocean shall displace the Indian Ocean as the highway to the East — in time. What we may be surer of is that the Arctic is far better known on the Union side than on the American side, and that much has been discovered and instituted, perhaps even organized, within the last ten years, which is of value to civilization already, and likely to yield further results for all future utilization and knowledge of the Arctic (and consequently of the Antarctic too), and all that is incidental thereto. So much does that last phrase involve in the way of political and mercantile potentialities that this Soviet-Arctic enterprise may well turn out to be one of the chief movements in world-history, and of greater consequence than any other one enterprise that is happening in our time. One change has already taken place. The Union section of the Arctic has become bureaucratized. It is subject to a Minister who rules a staff of 40,000.

One personal experience may be referred to. That boat which covered the through-route in a single season for the first time, travelling westwards, happened to put into Igarka when Ruth Gruber was there; and by it she returned to Murmansk. Although the people naturally treated her as a child, she was in a position to note what their personal relations were amongst themselves, and they surprised her by their whole-heartedness and kindliness. Even the Party Commissar was tolerable. The captain was 65 and still young; a pleasant, quiet man who told her that in the near future the route on which they were travelling would seem nothing out of the ordinary; that these experiments were making the unusual usual and bringing the unattainable nearer. The ideas of the exploring section were wholly scientific and philanthropic; borne out, too, by what came to

her notice as regards securing the welfare of women in labour in the most isolated districts round about by means of telephone and aeroplane. Their idea of their main function there was that the Arctic was a weather-kitchen and that on the basis of more accurate weather-reporting, which was going ahead year by year, information as to the weather to be expected in the succeeding months could and would and did benefit agriculturists as well as sailors. In fact, the lasting impression left by her book is of the depression and ineffectiveness of North America, the land of blind-alleys and disappointments, as compared with the good-humour, the hopefulness, the efficiency of chiefs and rank-and-file alike in the Soviet Arctic, the place for men, women and children who are out to see results from work well done and worth doing. An overdrawn picture, but a genuine impression. Sounder evidence goes to confirm it. More and more people get to work there: more and more can those who are there, whether on land or at sea, reach their destinations, return, and work in increasing safety and with increased economy of energy; and all that with an increased speed that means so much in areas wherein dark days are so many. More and more can they see to work indoors when outside it is dark. And they can obtain general directions as to how their time can best be spent. Natives and strangers are better able to equip themselves so as to retain health and good spirits, while the knowledge that such marked advances have come about within their own observation endows them with more hope that all this is but a beginning; that they can work not merely in blind faith that something may come of their sacrifices and hardships, but with the assurance that the practical new values that have been achieved are but little compared with the vastness of the potentialities that open out each year as certainties of the near future.

Equally important with the direct results are the by-

products. Experience with ice-breakers is going to benefit navigation on the rivers and on the sea of Aral, just as experience with meteorological stations in the North is going to assist the development of the mountainous Soviet Far-South as well. Then there is much to be attended to in experimenting with explosives and drilling and chemicals, directed towards reducing the dominance of the ice; and the idea of submarine navigation in the Polar seas is no more wild than many of to-day's daily adventures would have seemed at the end of the last century; submarines, that is, fitted with such power as will enable them to emerge through the ice above at will. One feature of the modern Arctic is in favour of progress — during the last twenty years or so the temperatures have been growing milder.

THE BASIN OF THE RIVER LENA

Every new detail that is ascertained about navigation in the Polar Ocean contributes towards the hope in, and perhaps the achievement of, a Moscow–San Francisco aeroplane service, across the North Pole; with all that that implies, besides contributing towards putting regular shipping-services between the North Russian ports and the Pacific on a serviceable basis; with all that that implies in the way of defence and attack, at need. But before this idea can become a serviceable one, not only must the through-route be rendered regular, but access to the three great rivers too. As things are, even at the most favourable season of the year, if a ship leaves Russia for the River Lena, it must leave again within fifteen days if it is to stand a chance of returning to Russia that year. All that might happen on this and the other rivers, all that might be brought from all along their courses, all that might be organized along their banks and at their mouths, supplies, values, powers, bases, men, all that

is frozen out for seven months or more every year; and if anything is organized as regards the warmer months, value for that organization has to be won during but five months in each year. Not that the five months are easy ones. The Yakuts, who form most of the population along the lower Lena, cut their hay by night in summer-time in order to avoid the excessive heat of the day. In fact, what with mud in spring and autumn, insect-plagues and dust-storms in summer, there is little enjoyment to be found except in the beauty of Siberian spring-time and in work. When the thaw comes the river is dangerous with floating ice. While much has been done, and, in certain ways, prospects are better than they have ever been before, the whole country of Siberia and the Farther East remains mostly desert. If anything is started, it has got to be begun at the beginning. All the materials requisite for making living and working practicable have got to be brought from afar: just as much as if the new station were in the Sahara. Regular supplies must be ensured: communications and transport provided for when every mile has its own difficulties and those varying ones according to the time of year. Deficits must be met indefinitely.

It is a task for two centuries. But whatever else is in fashion in the U.S.S.R., pessimism is not. Throughout the last eleven years, fresh advances have been realized; and each such realization brings the hope of more and discounts failures. It goes beyond local and national and racial effort; the difficulties to be met are scientific by nature, and all modern science contributes towards settling them one by one. All the tendency of civilized life for many centuries has ground its way into pushing civilization farther and farther north; in making life tolerable, and finally acceptable and pleasant, under conditions which in earlier ages rendered an early death certain and probably welcome.

But while modern science is making its contribution to this end, Russians are making their own special efforts. The effort which will, perhaps, affect the prospects of the Lena area most is one which took place far away, in the Kola peninsula, the extreme north-west of European Russia. Khibini, there, is a sort of Polar Rothamsted. In 1923, another genius, I. G. Eichfeld, exiled himself to that terrible climate, living in a primitive hut, in order to settle the question as to whether men could live and work in the Arctic freed from scurvy and other hindrances by means of keeping them supplied with fresh vegetables and dairy stuff raised on the spot. He has settled the question. They can be raised. The scope of his work extends far beyond his peninsula and the ice-free port of Murmansk which it benefits most directly. Seed that he has raised, acclimatized to Arctic temperatures, has gone to all those other quarters of the Union where similar temperatures have to be met; some sub-tropical, like those of Tadjikistan, but Arctic enough by reason of their altitude. No body of people stands to benefit more by these researches than do the English, with their immense Antarctic acquisitions.

Eichfeld had in front of him the most northerly agronomic station in the world, three kinds of soil, no manure, and three months' sunshine a year, though, certainly, sunshine for twenty-four hours a day when sunshine came. His assets, besides his own brain, were some enthusiastic workmen and two marvellous horses. But then again, the horses had to be provided with fodder; and was he to get hay from Novgorod, hundreds of miles away? — or from Kazakstan, half as far again? There was the alternative of mineral manure; but experiment showed him that he could not get full value out of mineral manure except on land that had been treated with animal manure. Some of the most promising land, too, stood under water most of the summer, and workers had to go

about on skis in mid-June. The first three years were spent reclaiming marsh. But the preliminary work was finished somehow: then came the main application of those ideas which he had had first to think out, then to convince himself, then to convince others, then to apply: in particular, how to create species of vegetation resistant to the terrible temperatures and yet productive. He had black-currant plants brought from Siberia, resistant to the temperature but unproductive, and crossed these with others which were productive, but not resistant. He succeeded. He went on to other bush-fruit, to vegetables, and then to flowers; to thirty-five big farms, 1,500 workers, 1,200 animals, tractors, 20,000 experiments; more achieved in the five years 1930–5 than had been achieved in Alaska, the only other place where anything similar had been attempted, in half a century. If Eichfeld had believed anything agricultural experts said, he would never have started. As it was, by 1934 he was feeding all his livestock on home-produced forage, and exporting a large proportion of his 30,000 lbs. of forage-seed for use elsewhere, as, for instance, into the Lena district, to be sown, partly by aeroplane, on land which thereby was converted into pasture-areas for reindeer and so put the reindeer-breeding industry on a new footing. He was raising grain, tobacco, tomatoes, cauliflowers, cucumbers, celery, strawberries, irises, roses, besides those fruits and homelier vegetables and flowers with which he started business; and exporting seed from these also to enable industry to thrive where otherwise it could not thrive and also to induce the nomad tribes of Siberia to settle and co-operate in a more satisfactory way of life than they had thought possible before.

None of this is taken from Soviet sources. It repeats what Steber, a Frenchman, and a scientist himself, saw in 1935 and heard from Eichfeld on the spot.

Construction of docks on the Lena was begun in 1933 and

12,000 tons of cargo are said to have been transported to or from the mouth. However, it is no use thinking of progress on the Lena in any but the most elementary terms. Sweeping condemnation of everything to do with it came from Schmidt, the leader of the Polar expedition; of shortage of skilled or trustworthy personnel, of arrangements for loading and unloading, etc. Recent reliable information is scanty. Shipbuilding, whether of river-craft or of ice-breakers, cannot be said to have really started. Railways there are none in this region, eight times the size of France, except where the Trans-Siberian crosses it in the far south, and where the Gold Trust has its fifty-mile private line linking up goldfields. Roads are so few and so bad that communications are at their best in the winter when dog and reindeer can draw sledges cross-country: almost all are no more than tracks which link villages together. The chief shortage is of men. On either side of the Lena extends the country from the River Yenisei to the Pacific, about 2,000 miles from east to west and 1,000 from north to south: its population is less than that of London; a district the size of France may contain less than 5,000 persons. The basin of the Lena itself, with its thousand or so tributaries, contains no more people than the town of Hull. And things go none too well. Nominally the medical assistance given to the inhabitants has quadrupled since 1931, taking both new buildings and staff into account. But the report for what was in action in 1937 states that all such institutions, and schools too, were in a lamentable state: the staff that was supposed to be there had in many cases not turned up, both as to teachers and to doctors; and those who were on duty were living in the buildings, often enough, instead of putting them to the uses they were designed for. At one centre 45 per cent. of the pupils were ill through insufficient food and bad housing. All this, and much else, was laid to the door of the Corpora-

tion which rules the North, whose headquarters are at Leningrad, and there, the report goes on to say, the demoralization is such that courses announced for their training-school had not been given, nor had any examination been held: while the publishing-house for the literatures of the peoples of the North had stopped publication and no material of the kind was available for use. Yet the writer goes on to add that progress in the economical and cultural welfare of these peoples makes great strides. It may be that the year in question was a bad one because the above-mentioned Polar expedition had absorbed all the time and energy of everyone concerned; but this is not stated in excuse. Certainly the volume (No. V) of the *Arctica* periodical issued under the care of R. L. Samoilovich and W. J. Wiese, two of the Institute's best men, who would be an asset to whatever country they lived in, in 1937, shows no sign of demoralization. The articles are often accompanied by clear and full summaries in good English, and the survey of the trapping and fur-trade of North-East Yakutia, the staple industry of the Lena basin, is the kind of information that is looked for but seldom produced in any language about the Union; a moderate and careful record of attempt and failure with the prospects of doing better in future.

The chief obstacle to progress hereabouts has been that one already referred to in the first chapter, i.e., the frozen subsoil. When the thaw comes, for instance, and the river rises with the melting of the snows at its sources, floods cover the land either side of the river: then the frozen soil prevents the draining-off of this flood-water until the river itself can take it back. And even in the ordinary way its breadth and volume amount to uncontrollable forces. Seventy volumes were written about this frozen subsoil between 1929 and 1934. A summary of what was being done about it in 1937 is obtainable in English from two

articles by G. B. Cressey compiled from observations on the spot. One article appeared in the *Journal of Geology* (Chicago), the other in the *Bulletin* of Denison University; both printed in 1939. They refer to the basin of the Yenisei, but apply in principle to all such subsoil. It would seem that the usual estimates of its depths are guesswork (100–200 feet): its depth is unknown, but certainly four times as deep as the estimates. In the same way the usual estimate of the depth of the thaw is misleading (3–5 feet). If the moss covering the earth is removed and all else done to expose the surface to the sun, the thaw reaches down to 15 feet. In such land drought is impossible. Possibilities in the way of raising crops extend accordingly. In fact, the raising of necessary crops and of many luxuries is no longer the chief difficulty, but rather the maturing of them. Artificial heat and light provided by electricity is being used to supplement crop-raising. Apple-trees are being trained flat on the ground to avoid the killing winds. At Igarka water-mains are laid with steam-pipes alongside which prevent the water-supply freezing. In this way the most important hindrance to the use of the frozen subsoil region — lack of drinking water — ceases to be an insoluble problem.

Another hindrance to the use of the Lena area is the bad name it has got from being utilized as a centre for exile under the Tsars and since their time as well. This comes of Siberia being divisible into two halves; a plain and a mountainous region: it is here that the mountains begin, to the east of the Lena. The region is so remote, so vast, so inhospitable that a prisoner has little hope of surviving if he tries to escape. So wide and so trackless is it that in 1926 a range of mountains 400 miles long was discovered, unknown before: and much of what is known is unexplored.

Still, from the point of view of experts who know the region best and its possibilities, and discern what could be

done if only people would take the arguable point of view that the development of it is the most important issue on earth, then there is nothing to prevent it from ceasing to be desert except the views of all other kinds of experts that it is their specialities which are the things that matter most on earth: in addition to the vacillating beliefs of politicians as to which, if any, really matter anyhow. Chaos rules, yet there is the change that it is recognized that chaos has no business to be granted a free hand. Besides, things do move. If the alcohol and syphilis that foreigners brought in, in times gone by, to the ruin of the natives, are still working out that ruin, the effects are being checked — perhaps. The severity of the climate has the benefit that only the strongest children grow up; and for those it is healthy. In fact, the river villages are being used, it is said, as a health resort in the best season for factory-hands from a distance. The fact that it was used as a place for exile has not turned out wholly to its disadvantage; a percentage of those now in control have spent time there when their blackest days were proceeding and there is consequently more knowledge of local conditions — and possibilities — at headquarters than is the case in England as regards our more neglected heritages. Then too, the very distance from headquarters hinders the occurrence of events which have thwarted many good governmental intentions nearer home, the intervention of hot-headed underlings overdoing the latest crazes. This is reinforced by the character of the inhabitants of Russian descent, one of the assets of Siberia. It has been noted in the previous chapter of what stocks they came from; and their descendants do not necessarily bear Russian names. Ethnologists are in the habit of assuming that all of us are of legitimate descent and pure-bred; but fortunately for the construction of our characters and physiques, there is some percentage of illegitimacy and cross-breeding in most communities and

never more fortunately than in Siberia. Thinking slowly, talking little, independent, given to feel that what Siberia thinks to-day, Russia will have to think to-morrow, they may be living down their bloody past and forming a new nation of a new to-morrow, beyond all present calculations and intentions. Certainly, there is nothing dull about Siberian life, if one may judge by two excellent books by Siberians, translated by Dr. Malcolm Burr: *Marfa*, by Nina Smirnova, and *Dersu the Trapper*, by V. K. Arseniev. At any rate, they provide the material out of which a large proportion of the world's cleverest and most daring aviators issues: all the more significant since the world's fastest air-services can be produced along a coast-line where an aviator can fly twenty-four hours a day in daylight for much of the year. A Moscow-North American air-service along the coasts is as likely as any Transatlantic or Transpolar service from Europe.

More definite is the fact that before 1930 no motor vehicle had been seen in the Yakut district; by 1934 439 tractors and 395 passenger motors had been brought there. The sown area had been doubled; schools, more doctors, some hospitals, were on offer and the beginnings of a national library in evidence. A meteorological station was in working order in 1929, and may still be, on the Oimekon plateau beyond the river which is reckoned the coldest spot on the face of the earth. Anyone who has the *Geographical Review of New York* at hand will find an article printed in 1935 (pp. 625–42) on the Mountain-systems of North-Eastern Asia by S. V. Obruchev, one of the first-rate Russian explorers and scientists who has been hard at work for a lifetime under every political system he has had the misfortune to encounter, which will tell much more. But to the present generation dogs and reindeer mean more than new mountains, and all attempts to put the improvement of breeding

and rearing and utilizing both on a new and scientific footing have apparently been failures.

The River Lena pours into the sea at Tiksi Bay. Plans are out to convert this bay into a port-harbour, for which it has many natural advantages, into an important port on the northern sea-route; but at present Tiksi Bay is all bay and no port. And coaling-stations which cannot even be expected to be ready for eighteen months are necessary to supplement anything on the Lena before the route can become mercantile or strategic; one such station is in contemplation, or perhaps even in progress, in the Chukotsk peninsula, once three years' journey from Moscow, and now at two months' distance by sea in the summer and, say, a fortnight by aeroplane. All these plans, achievements, ideas, are complementary, and the Lena is the centre of them all; and of more to come — some time, under somebody. At present, the maintenance of what traffic there is is dependent on Spitzbergen for most of its coal.

TANNA-TUVA

Now we are leaving the mainland, so to speak, of Siberia, and moving into the hinterland, where lie the uppermost reaches and the sources of another river, the Yenisei. A glance at the map will show that where these sources spring lies a triangular pocket of land. At the base of this triangle runs the boundary of Mongolia; but inside the triangle itself is neither Mongolia nor Soviet, being marked as an independent republic, Tanna-Tuva, flanked by two Soviets, one named the Buriat, and the other that of the Oirots. Tanna-Tuva is a sort of natural fortress, resembling a house with small rooms but enormously thick walls: whosoever holds that has a hold on Mongolia, on Chinese Turkestan, and on Soviet resources. Moscow has that hold. Outside Union

territory though it be, there is no place which is more of a living model of their methods and aims — probably. But there again is the gap which is the first factor to recognize in dealing with such matters: there is no place which is more difficult to enter, none where recent information more completely fails us. Sidelight is the most we can hope for.

Some sidelights are to be obtained from a little attention to those two flanking Soviets, the Buriat and the Oirot. They are worth it for their own sakes; two most attractive districts.

The Buriat lies around Lake Baikal, the 'Buriat Sea.' Sea it once was: seals are found in it still. A sacred lake too, to the Buriats: and no small one; 338 rivers run into it and England could be sunk in it. An unforgettable place, says Slonim, 1,300 feet above sea-level, surrounded by cliffs and forests. Slonim's vast experience of the varieties of people to be found in what are nowadays Soviets makes him stop to tell us that Buriats are among the pleasantest people he has come across; profound, original, meditative, efficient, and exceeding even the average of Asian peoples in the beauty of their poetry and tales. On one side of the lake they are Buddhist; on the other spirit-worshippers, of those who use 'Shamans' as priest-mediums between the worlds of spirits and of humanity. Their town Kiachta must be one of the towns best worth studying; the traditional centre of the Chinese tea-trade. Of course, tradition is having a strenuous struggle to hold its own. Ulan-Uda, their capital, has its locomotive works and its air-line to Ulan-Bator, the capital of Mongolia. Some of the Buriats are learning to sleep in beds, and getting acquainted with soap, toothbrushes, bicycles; they are endowed with 611 elementary schools, 103 secondary schools, eight technical institutes, all at work alienating their 68,000 pupils from their parents, pitting one generation against another and hoping good will come of it.

There are many Old Believers, too; descendants of those who exiled themselves rather than put up with the too-progressive government of their own day in Old and Holy Russia, long ago.

The Oirots, on the other flank, are blessed with recent traditions. The Altaï Mountains, in the most out-of-the-way part of which the Oirots dwell, is the part of all others in which Russians are inclined to locate Utopia: all around there used to be the private property of the Tsars: and loveliness of its mountain-scenery combines with sentiment and romance to endow the Oirots and their 'republic' with exotic charm. They call it the Russian Switzerland: but it must be ten times better than Switzerland, since it is ten times as big. All these features are modern enough. The Romanovs only annexed that as private property in 1882; the name Oirots was applied in 1917. Here Steber is as recent a visitor as could be wished; but it is curious that he gives the number of schools as 175, whereas Slonim, an earlier visitor, gives it as 250. However, such discrepancies meet us at every turn. The natives seemed to Steber as differing radically from Buriats; a solemn people, these Oirots, barely acquainted with laughter, and not at all with dancing; even their weddings were sad and sober. The future seems none too bright for them, either. They seem to be caught between the devil of tourism and the deep sea of politics. North-west lies the hub of modern Siberia, the chief industrial venture and centre of the U.S.S.R., the Kusnetsk area, a truly marvellous effort on the success of which all their military and other hopes hinge. The Oirots' land will be the chief holiday centre for its ever-growing industrial towns, and health-centre, too, since curative waters exist in plenty and are being utilized. But the more significant point is Biisk, the departure-point of the ancient route into Mongolia. Thither runs a branch of the Turksib railway, and the railway may

be prolonged alongside the road. Already a section of the road is practicable for motor-cars. In the schools they jump straight from the seventeenth century into the twentieth, or perhaps the twenty-first: the pupils are becoming familiarized with mechanized agriculture and stock-raising and carpentering, with the telephone, the factory, the love of peace and the dignity of man. They even have a song in which they say good-bye to Poverty. But has Poverty said good-bye to them? Still, they certainly do have the doctor, and if he cures what they are wont to think of as incurable, that does stimulate faith and hope, and faith and hope are real treasures.

North of Tanna-Tuva is splendid country, as much so as those parts east and west of it: day and night brilliant with an exceptionally lovely and clear sky, and the countryside in some degree prosperous with the handiwork of a mixed population, descendants of former exiles who ended by becoming settlers, Poles, Swedes, Lithuanians, and more also.

As to Tanna-Tuva itself there seem to be only two sources dating within the last twelve years; both German. One is by Dr. Werner Leimbach, *Landeskunde von Tuwa* (published in *Petermanns Mitteilungen*, 1936), an outstanding example of German 'Grundlichkeit' which treats of all aspects of Tanna-Tuva from, say, 40,000 B.C. to A.D. 1935 — every aspect, that is, except how and what the individuals living there feel and think when they are being their own unsophisticated selves. It may be taken as summarizing all Russian and German research up to its date. The other book is a personal, highly and attractively personal, record of a visit thither in 1929: Otto Mänchen-Helfen, *Reise ins asiatische Tuwa* (1931). Its value extends far beyond its special subject. It shows colonizing and dominating processes at work even at that early date; processes which are in

progress in neighbouring lands, in Chinese Turkestan and in Mongolia, on a far more extensive scale, and which have gone farther subsequently. The only difference between Tanna-Tuva and a Soviet 'republic' is that Moscow keeps an ambassador there. There is only one road into Tanna-Tuva, and that comes from Soviet territory: only one steam-boat service, and that in the same direction: only one telegraph, and that Soviet-owned. And then there are the flanking-republics to serve by way of any object-lesson that may be required. But not much in that way is needed: the Tuvinians rebelled in 1924 and have not forgotten the results yet.

Not that there is any one and indivisible Tuvinian people. The region is defined by natural boundaries, and 'Tuvinian' may be applied to those who live there; neither more nor less. Their interests and sufferings have much in common; their derivations and occupations vary as widely as do those of every other so-called nation. But certain characteristics Mänchen-Helfen found they all had in common: charm, kindliness, and intelligence. He had exceptional opportunities to find out. As an instructor at Moscow he came across Tuvinian students there, and gained their confidence. When an expedition to the country was under consideration at Moscow, he asked to go with it, and with great difficulty obtained permission. In the end the expedition was cancelled, but he had gone on ahead with some native students who were returning home, and it was in their company that he made the most of his brief visit. On his return to Germany every scrap of written material he had with him was taken by the Ogpu; but most of his notes had fortunately gone on in advance. In one other respect this author is more valuable than all the other sources used for this book put together. Besides his interest in Tanna-Tuva, he had a particular desire to know more about 'Shamanism'; he

gained the Shamans' confidence, too; could comprehend what they said in the course of their ritual, and is the only person mentioned in this book who possesses knowledge of 'Shamans' other than as curiosities.

Considering the violent antagonism with which the Party rages against their ritual and influence, this knowledge is exceedingly valuable. Mänchen-Helfen was much impressed by the personal character of those shamans whose acquaintance he made, and the author is a person whose opinion about someone else is of value. Each shaman had his own methods as well as certain methods common to them all; they attained their position as a result of no election or privilege, but by reason of qualifications for the work developing in a child, much against the parents' wishes; since there was nothing to be gained by becoming a shaman and the ritual was an overwhelming tax on physical strength. Their main qualification was a certain power of vision which was held to be real amongst the people in general as a result of experience, and was combined with knowledge not possessed commonly and of practical use. This was the more so since Tuvinian standards of religion are high, and they tend to develop puritanic movements reacting against any debasements of the lamaism which is the formal religion of those parts. In fact, in Tanna-Tuva the Soviet representatives make more of a stand against the lamas than against the shamans; debarring three classes only from voting for the mock parliament which preserved the formality of independence for Tanna-Tuva, namely, the insane, lamas, and criminals. In short, the account which this writer gives takes shamanism out of the witch-doctor level ascribed to it by others and by the Soviet writers, all of whom are clearly prejudiced with the hostility of ignorance.

Another asset of this author is his acquaintance with provincial periodicals, an acquaintance which no other writer

exhibits, and one which is the more needed because the Moscow papers are more or less doctored for the benefit of foreigners. He quotes instances showing the extent to which the former are employed for purposes of local terrorization. He is also acquainted with the teaching in the Soviet schools and speaks of the bias imparted there too; though of course this was in 1929, since which time local likes and dislikes have been freely taken into account where temporizing and more moderation have seemed worth while. The administration of the region is most profitable to the Union, much wealth being extracted from it by official and unofficial means. All the richer people are well 'milked,' but none of this wealth is ploughed back into Tanna-Tuva; all imports are controlled. One of the grievances most felt by the people is that they are no longer allowed to smoke the Chinese tobacco they prefer, but are compelled to use what is supplied from Russia.

A lovely country, concludes Mänchen-Helfen: a pleasant people; but how pathetic in the stranglehold fastened on it!

BIROBIDJAN

Passing away from Tanna-Tuva back to the Buriats and so continuing eastwards, we get to where the Trans-Siberian railway runs parallel with another of the world's greatest rivers, the Amur. There was a time when the Amur might have been included amongst Siberian rivers, making Siberia a Land of the Four Rivers instead of Three, but — for the present — the most important section of its course is no more than half-Soviet, forming as it now does the boundary between the Union and Manchuria. Just where it leaves Manchuria it turns north-east, having previously run south-east. Within the triangle thus formed lies the Soviet 'Jewish Colony,' Birobidjan: so called because it covers the basins of

two rivers, the Biro and the Bidjan. It was in 1928 that this area was set aside as a new Promised Land for the Jewish race.

Accounts of events and of the state of affairs there are so contradictory that it would be impossible to compose a picture either of what has happened, or of what is happening, there. At the same time, details drawn from various more or less authentic, or authorized, sources are so typical of what is met with when endeavouring to ascertain the truth about the Union that it may be worth while taking these witnesses one by one and seeing what they say.

The *Statesman's Year-Book* speaks of Birobidjan as containing 36,490 km. sq., and 60,000 people (1935). The census of 1939 gives 109,000.

Charles Steber spent much time there in 1935, traversing the whole area from end to end and side to side; and from above, by aeroplane as well: all with his usual diligence and enthusiasm, the more so since the ideas, the aims, the methods, the prospects, struck him as epitomizing all that is most characteristic of the Union. He tells its story — how, in 1928, 600 Jews arrived; how twenty-eight of them went out pioneering and settled on uncleared land, naming their new home with a German name, Waldheim, and how, in 1935, he found eighty-five families in occupation, with their hospital, communal nursery, library, telephone and telegraph. And so with many other settlements, each one specializing in some branch or other of elementary necessity, agriculture, stock-raising, mining, aviation, all linked up with satisfactory roads; likewise a sanatorium which certainly looks most attractive in a photograph. The chief town, also named Birobidjan, is on the railway, endowed with a library which was insufficient for a town which is developing so rapidly, although in receipt of 250 periodicals. It also possesses a theatre, completed in 1933. The mineral-

exporting centre, Stalinsk, began with 100 colonists in 1930 and had grown to 10,000 by 1935.

Not that these people had an easy time, Steber says; the Amur is frozen from November to April. Summer brings clouds of mosquitoes. The land consists mainly of marsh and forest. None are suited to it but hardy and hard-working pioneers. Working-hours are the same as throughout the U.S.S.R. (at that time), namely, eight hours for men and six hours for women, with rest-days on the 6th, 12th, 18th, 24th and 30th days of each month. There is no synagogue, but plenty of sport. Steber seems to have gone about freely and talked to all he wished to talk to, coming away with beliefs confirmed that the whole place promised well; symbolizing, too, the construction of something new and true and better, both physically and spiritually, and likewise the destruction of the bad old myths which create the misery we see around us, and only require to be disbelieved in in order to vanish and leave us happy and in peace. He specifies the area of Birobidjan as 38,950 km. sq., as compared with 23,000 for Palestine. The *Statesman's Year-book* gives 25,168 for Palestine.

Marc Slonim apparently did not visit Birobidjan. He describes it as consisting of 73,000 km. sq., and thinks that some years hence will be time enough to take stock of results. Kalinin, the president of the Union, was also reserved in speaking about it in 1934; but in the 'Chronicle' of the *Slavonic Review* for 1938 (p. 228) there is reference to the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the foundation of the settlement, when the Jewish population was reckoned at 20,000. Later official information is to be gathered from a pamphlet issued at Moscow by D. Bergelson in 1939. He reckons the size as ninety million acres, which works out to about ten times the size of Palestine. He describes the town of Birobidjan as seen from the top of a four-story building,

whereas as late as 1933, he tells us, the town contained no building which could be considered as of a self-respecting height. Then it was difficult to cross the street; now there are paved paths and good roads, lined with trees. It owns a cinema, a machine-and-tractor-station, a theatre, a sports-ground, factories for clothing and furniture. The actors and the furniture are celebrated all over the Far East. People who live there include people who gave birth to the town. Furniture is being made by the first furniture-worker; one actor is Birobidjan's first actor; the barber its first barber; its photographer its first photographer. In the same way, at Birofeld, another German-named settlement, 30 miles from the capital, there are men and women who had never handled a horse nor milked a cow before they came thither, and now are expert farmers. The district had no newspaper in 1928: now it issues six dailies. In 1928 its post amounted to 3 million letters and telegrams: by 1938 the total had risen to 10 millions. It contains ten radio-centres, fifteen cinemas, twelve clubs, twenty-nine libraries. Yet in 1928 the settlers who set out to build a decent house had first to discover clay, then construct a road along which to bring the clay, then construct a kiln for baking it, and to import horses from Siberia and trucks from anywhere before they could start building. Bergelson gives no detail to show how Jewish the region is supposed, or expected, to be.

Tomaso Napolitano would not endorse this version. He is a somewhat vindictive controversialist, but draws on Russian and Soviet-Jewish publications. Writing in the *Nuova Antologia* for May 1939 on 'Razzismo sovietico,' he describes Birobidjan as twice the size of Palestine, and affirms that the first contingent of Jews did not arrive there till 1929; 650 persons in all, coming from Kazakstan, Minsk, and Smolensk; by the end of that year the number

was increased to 1,000. Another 500 arrived in 1930, and by the end of 1931, three years after the institution of the Colony, the number of Jews amounted to 3,000. There was by that date no official information as to what was actually going on; but Moscow joked about it all as a concentration-camp for Jewish 'kulaks.' In 1932 the number of Jewish immigrants was raised to 19,000, but in that same year Genesis had turned into Exodus. By the end of 1933, the number was down to 3,500. What, Napolitano asks, had happened to the other 15,500? He has not been able to find an answer to this query, but surmises that these people could not have gone elsewhere except by means of official consent or by deportation. By 1934 official opinion had come to the conclusion that the scheme could not be carried through otherwise than by violence, although two years later Lazar Kaganovich, the Union's chief organizer, was stating publicly that this new Hebrew State would naturally attract Jews from all over the Far East. In 1934–5 200 families arrived; in 1936, 129 families; in 1937, 2,950 persons were expected, 361 persons arrived — these figures he takes from *Emes*, the organ of the Russian Communist Jews, which paper adds that these Jews had never seen the earth close to before, were unprovided with advice or necessaries, and were under an obligation to supply vegetables to towns which were not connected with their settlements by any road. Animals died from exposure from want of stables; grain perished from want of barns. No efficient work could be done for want of organization. Two hundred families which had come from Lithuania had been exterminated either by typhus or the Ogpu. Dissensions amongst the Jews themselves had been repressed by the Soviet authorities with the utmost severity. The paper *Emes* has been suppressed; the president of the organization for Jewish agriculture has been arrested. Seventy per cent. of the Jews who

had been conveyed to Birobidjan had perished; the rest were under the charge of the Ogpu.

Considering all this contradictory evidence, some queries arise. Why, when there are about three million Jews under Soviet rule, have not more been induced, or compelled, to settle in Birobidjan? Why have those who have been taken thither been never more than a minority, never more than one in three of the total population, when where is room for so many? A glance at the map may suggest an answer to these queries, and, at the same time, put the whole business on a different footing. The above-quoted enquirers have concerned themselves with Birobidjan as a self-contained region; the map suggests some interpretation based on the surroundings being taken into consideration as well. A great gap has been driven into what used to be Tsarist dominions by the Japanese; a gap which leaves Vladivostock in an isolated and perilous situation. Moreover, the district north of Birobidjan is scheduled to become the fourth largest metallurgical area in the Union. It would seem a most risky spot to choose for what would primarily be munition-works — asking for trouble. But consider further the geography of the surroundings. The tributaries of the Amur are big rivers, and those more or less under the control of the Japanese are the biggest: the basin of the Amur forms not only a geographical whole but also an economic one: all these tributaries constituting a network of trading-routes which, furthermore, link up railways, both constructed and planned. Viewed from this point of view, Birobidjan appears no longer as an outpost of an important but defenceless region but the centre of a region which the Russians once controlled and which the Union intend to regain, thereby restoring Vladivostock to its former importance as a naval base on the Pacific. If thousands of people, Jews or others, are left there to sink

or swim, something will come of it which will facilitate the process of rendering this region more easy to improve on from the strategic point of view in the future.

Amongst living people who allow their knowledge of both banks of the Amur — and not of one bank alone — to get into print, there is probably no one who knows more than Bruno Plaetschke. His experience of this geographical unit is incorporated in an article in *Petermanns Mitteilungen* (Vol. 82; 1936), based on journeys round about there 1932–3. His estimate of the number of Jews brought to Birobidjan is 18,000 between 1928 and 1933, and 7,000 remaining by the end of 1933. He adds that these Jews are not so very Jewish: tending to atheism, in fact, and not only doing without rabbis, synagogues, and beards but are specialists in pig-breeding. On the other hand, there are many strict observers of Jewish custom and ritual round about these parts; but they are all Russian peasantry, belonging to the sect of 'Subbotniki' whose affinities with Jewry are well known. Perhaps it was their presence there that originally suggested the 'Jewish State' idea.

Altogether, does not the evidence suggest that while the planning nominally (and, perhaps, at one time, seriously) mooted is well calculated to assist both friends and antagonists to continue along the lines that their respective preconceptions predispose them to, the Union continues organization there along the lines of well-laid plans of a totally different kind which will quietly mature for its benefit to the ruin of its opponents — in time? At any rate it was not worth while making a further move until Japan had finished paying for the Chinese Eastern Railway. The Chinese Eastern Railway runs through Manchuria to Vladivostock. The Union sold this line to the Japanese, in spite of the fact that part of it belonged to the Chinese, leaving it to the Japanese

to improve it. It will be a valuable asset to recover, free. The final payment was made January 4, 1940.

TADJIKISTAN

In the third chapter there is mention of Boris Pilniak and his account of Tadjikistan. It will be as well to keep what he says separate from other evidence because Steber affirms in his volume of 1939 that the influence of the U.S.S.R. did not make itself felt in Tadjikistan until 1932. Pilniak went there in 1930, and was there three months — summer months. Up to 1926 the whole district had suffered even more than elsewhere from civil war. Nevertheless, what struck Pilniak most was that never before this visit of his to Tadjikistan had he realized the place of water in human life; and considering that Pilniak had evidently been about Sicily beforehand that saying goes far. Terrific torrents rush down from the highest mountains in the world on to a plain lying in the same latitude as Sicily. What with crossing the torrents in the mountains, and utilizing the water for irrigation on the plain, water-problems enter into the lives of all the inhabitants. They have grown accustomed to using the water; they had never done much towards crossing it. Passing a river was done resting on inflated skins; you undressed and said good-bye to the world, and entrusted yourself to the current in the hope that it might deposit you on the farther bank. The method is one in use elsewhere, but in this case the arrival may well happen fifteen kilometres downstream. And, if you were a native, you might live. A European would generally die of cold in the water or of congestion of the lungs later. Barges had begun to be used in places; these had to be hauled upstream by 100 men, and then let drift downstream. When they were used for cargo, they often sank. Motor ferry-boats did exist, too; but often lay

stranded on sandbanks. Even when reaching the plains, the strength of the currents is so furious that a river will change its course all of a sudden and, taking the workers in the cotton-fields by surprise, sweep them away and leave their bodies miles from their fields. Twenty-five ferry-boats had been taken into use by the time Pilniak came there; but all progress awaited road- and railway-construction. Much was being done; at one point Pilniak crossed a torrent by ferry when he went and by a new bridge on his return.

He started by aeroplane, but at the Samarkand aerodrome there came a wire to tell them not to come further, the 'Afghanietz' was blowing, the wind from the Afghanistan direction, sending fine dust a mile or two up in the air: man cannot see another man at five paces when it blows; an aviator cannot see to land and the dust clogs his motor. Other aeroplanes arrived; passengers and crews stopped there three days, not seeing twenty paces around them, telling each other their life-stories and the latest scandal from the district, with a yellow sky above their heads, and weird sounds issuing from the wind in the desert, like sobs, screeching and harp-music.

Another air-journey took Pilniak to Garm, up in the mountains; amidst Arctic cold in mid-July: one and a quarter hours by air, and five days on horseback. A road was under construction; and Garm itself had been established as a centre for construction in the mountain districts. Everything wherewith to make this start had had to be brought thither, and brought on animals. From Garm labourers were being sent off with materials carried on asses and on horses, to build and to rebuild. Two students from Leningrad were staying there to study the language; two young women, too, for meteorology, and a film-producer to make a record of what was going on, with some film-actors. Two years before the writer's arrival nothing of the kind had existed there: he

found a hospital and dispensary and post-office besides the departmental buildings. The trials of establishing post-offices are beyond the normal: two such workers told him how they had recently got stuck in the mud and had to abandon their horses, descending by way of a glacier on knees and knuckles for thirty-six hours.

Pilniak journeyed to Garm to make a start thence for Darvaz, the 'country of tight-rope dancers,' as it is named from the character of the ways round about. Ravines are crossed on bridges so narrow that the horse's mane and the rider's own knees prevent him from seeing the bridge at all. These bridges are made of two tree-trunks laid down, covered with branches, and a layer of gravel on top; no fastenings. When the mountain-road was brought to an end by a blank precipice, the track was continued along the face by similar constructions, held on the face of the precipice by poles driven into it. The native horses were superior to any European horses for such work, and the best way for a European was to shut his eyes and trust his horse. Still, even these horses would frequently stumble in the gravel. Once one of Pilniak's companions shot out into the void and his horse with him, hit earth, rolled for fifty yards and got caught by a rock on the brink of a precipice 4,000 feet deep. Had it not been for the rock, it would have been no use going to salvage him: it would have taken three days and the wolves would have had him before that. As it was, the Russian came back to the path and his horse too; none the worse for the shock himself; but the horse had a nervous breakdown. Many were the tales they told of those bridges. One was named the bridge where So-and-so cried. So-and-so was an official who always went through the same routine when he passed that bridge: first he took to cursing the Soviet and the Communist Party, then everyone in general, and then burst out crying. One doctor who passed that way

sent a note back to his wife saying he could not face a return-journey; either she must come to him or get a divorce: they never saw each other again. On one such bridge Pilniak himself felt the bridge swing and the Universe swing with it. Even on the tracks they could not always sit straight on the horse; they would be either holding on by its ears or following behind holding on to its tail. At one point Pilniak noticed the lights of the village they were making for while he was at a dizzy height above it in the dark: thinking his horse too near the edge of that precipice, he reined him in and tried to turn his head, but the horse refused: during the short struggle that ensued his cigarette fell out of his mouth on the other side and, instead of hitting the ground, he saw it falling down and down and down out of sight and the voice of his companion came out of the darkness in front, growling sleepily, 'Be careful, there's a precipice each side of you.'

Yet on these tracks are to be met ass-caravans carrying telegraph-poles and wires, stoves, books, chemicals, radio-sets. The radio-sets are essential factors in innovations, used in order to let the people know in advance what it is proposed to do next and to allow them a little while to settle down to the idea.

Far more so did things stand in Stalinabad, the capital, even in 1930. In 1925 its population had been a few hundreds: during the five years up to Pilniak's visit its population had been doubling itself every year. In 1925 there had been no European building in the town; by 1930 all was laid out in European style though thousands were living underneath the plane-trees for want of lodging. It was a centre for aeroplane services and of a network of railway lines, new and projected. Of all places that Pilniak had seen or dreamed of, Stalinabad was the one which offered most to those who wished to build a new world. Nowhere

was the spirit of initiative and the will to work in such demand and repute: every worker was a pioneer and an inventor: plenty of people there already working from 7 a.m. to 2 a.m. to make that new world come true. But never skilled workers enough. He writes to appeal to them to come and take a hand; but, he adds, let those who come be decent. Few Tadjiks were to be seen in the streets of Stalinabad: almost all of its crowd were foreigners, and those mostly Russians and rogues. He speaks plainly of the seamy side of Stalinabad. A leper-village close by; typhus and diphtheria common; funerals frequent but not nearly frequent enough: criminals find it easy to get themselves entrusted with control. Many emigrants from Siberia arrive, often attracted by the reputation of Tadjikistan as a Klondyke; most of them die. Everything and everybody are feverish with haste and want of skilled labour and defects of organization. Tractors arrive without ploughs: when the ploughs arrive at last, the ploughmen work twenty-four hours a day to make up for lost time and get level with the time of year for ploughing; while they plough, petrol gives out.

This witness is a particularly useful one, not only for this 'republic' but likewise in respect of one subject that crops up in every region of the U.S.S.R., that is, the alleged deterioration of the local population under the influence of drink and syphilis supplied to them under the previous régime. He speaks of the smuggling of brandy, etc., as a matter of course; and, as for syphilis, one engineer-in-charge complained to him of the result of applying to the Labour Exchange for women-workers to harvest the cotton-crop. The 8,000 asked for were sent, sure enough; but all were syphilitic. These recruits were poisoning the whole district: the price of such women had fallen by 70 per cent.; before they came you had to pay as much for a woman as for a bottle of brandy. He was sending the lot back, and they with 100

kilometres to walk before they reached a railway-station and dying of typhus on the way.

Side by side with all the ancient contrasts, such as blocks of ice in the river while the heat of the day was tropical, there are all those born of the change-over from the accustomed habits to the latest kinds of modernity. One friend he went to see, and was welcomed by the brother and sister as well; but the father refused even to see a visitor who was an unbeliever.

Then there was the Peasants' House at Stalinabad, where actors, musicians, singers, collected to be encouraged to 'develop' Tadjik art, and a party of actors from the chief theatre of Moscow gathering material for a new play, 'The Mountains have Moved,' all about Tadjikistan for Moscow audiences. In a mosque type-writers and calculating-machines were clicking away, while, in the cotton-fields, refuges still stood wherein the workers might take shelter if wild boars attacked them, and the life of the villages went on in the traditional way, centring round a plane-tree, under which stood a tank, with a tea-house near by, and all the men gathering round in the evening to discuss the news, with never a word about business or women.

However much rascality existed amongst the foreigners, virtues were valued, and it was noted that the Tadjiks possessed them all. Pilniak was much struck by the contrast between them and the peasants he was used to in Russia: their dignity, their walk, their speech and behaviour, the rings on their fingers, the flowers in their leather belts — all savouring of an ancient civilization and spirit Russians lacked.

So far Pilniak, and of Tadjikistan as he saw it in 1930.

As to what else may be collected about Tadjikistan, there is much to be found and more to be inferred, for the reason that it is no separate district but has so much in common

with its neighbourhood. In particular, the great majority of Tadjiks do not live in Tadjikistan at all, but in Afghanistan. They are often said to possess the true ancient Persian speech; but the truth would seem to be that most Tadjiks do not understand most other Tadjiks, and use the archaic speech as the nearest approach they have to a commonly understood language.

As to the country itself, few countries could include so great variety, and that within limits little larger than those of England, with a population (in 1939) less than that of Staffordshire. Its ways and climate resemble, in succession, those of Egypt, Tibet, and Moscow; it is the world's greatest staircase, rising abruptly from lowlands which raise silk and cotton and supply much of the dried fruit which the Union consumes to summits which form part of what we know as the Roof of the World. The lowlands are tropical: in the higher ground they estimate the mildness or severity of the winter by the number of persons frozen to death in their beds. Above all, from the point of view of to-day, it is at once a shop window and a strategic point of the U.S.S.R.

In so far as the countryside is freely passable, it has been, and naturally is, a focus of trade-routes, and consequently the meeting-place of many people. Tibet, China, India, Central Asia, Afghanistan find common ground there: and if this is set down here in terms of names of countries, it is because to describe it in terms of names of peoples would be beyond the power of the most experienced and beyond the nomenclature of the learned. What goes on, therefore, in this unit of Soviet Asia, is strategical in a special sense, namely, because in so far as a policy is successful in that area, a greater diversity of people hear of it, and feel it, than is likely to happen elsewhere. The nearness of Tadjikistan to India lends special point to this. Soviet-Tadjik literature concerns itself particularly with Indian grievances. But it

has to be recognized that amidst all the barren evils of controversy and intrigue in which all parties represented in this area take part, except, no doubt, the Tadjiks themselves, there is a fiery crusade in progress inspired by a principle which does form some sort of connecting link amongst the enthusiast section of the Party and their associates and is a reality to be taken into account, however much it may be exploited by the colder-blooded section. That principle is that every person is a product of his locality, but that most localities have been damaged, not irretrievably, by degenerate influences. Propaganda figures state that instead of witch-doctors the area is now endowed with 144 hospitals, 797 clinics, 168 nurseries; instead of a man trying to create a kitchen-garden by carrying up basketfuls of earth and leaving it to his son to finish that garden, and the son perhaps seeing the whole swept away in ten minutes by some furious torrent, there were in 1937 3,000 tractors, 1,000 motor-trucks, there. Then in 1937, too, the co-operative stores sold 12,000 gramophones, 3,000 radio sets, 2,200 bicycles, 2,000 sewing-machines, 13 pianos. What criticism is to be brought to bear on these figures is a matter of taste: but it may be worth while mentioning that there is the usual discrepancy to be found in another report which states the hospitals at ninety-six and supplementary stations at 348. Such figures can neither be accepted nor ignored: we are on more or less safe ground when we say that they contain implications which cannot be rejected, and on safer ground still when we attend to what Steber has to say about the seeds from Khibini, details of which have been given already, being used up in the mountains of Tadjikistan and altering life there as much for the better as in Siberia. Another example from Steber is his account of the founding of an observatory at Fedtchenko, at 13,000 feet up. All the girders and other material for construction had to be transported on horseback

for the final twenty-five miles, across ice and moraines, along precipices where the least slip might mean total loss and death for man and beast. All the camels tried on this attempt were killed or disabled. Amidst snowstorms and hurricanes at ninety feet per second which knocked men head over heels, the seventeen constructors carried on and carried out their work, beginning in 1932 and hibernating in snow-huts that winter. The following year they continued far enough for five technicians to make observations during the winter of 1933–4 in a three-quarters-finished station, which was completed in 1934.

Coupled with such details, Steber remarks that the force of tradition will continue to be a force to be reckoned with for a long while to come yet. From a Soviet point of view, however, what matters most in Tadjikistan is cotton.

INDUSTRY

COTTON. It may be taken as probable that the quantity and quality of cotton produced in the Union has improved during these last fifteen years to an extent which renders those improvements one of the major facts in world-industry within that period. But when endeavouring to make the estimate a more precise one we are faced with the difficulty that we receive too much information about cotton from those who decide how much will be grown in the Union, too little information from those who have seen it growing, and none at all from those who grow it. That is particularly so with regard to Tadjikistan. However, as regards Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, two neighbouring provinces, we are better supplied: as to the latter by J. M. Maynard, in an article published in Volume XV of the *Slavonic Review*, and through Tchokaieff, a native of Turkmenistan, already mentioned in Chapter III; their evidence will apply in some

degree to Tadjikistan. Maynard tells us that an error was made in insisting on the substitution of cotton for rice among Uzbeks. They were promised grain to live on in place of the rice, but the grain did not arrive. Then they were told to return to growing rice: but the ancient and perfected irrigation-system suited for the rice had been destroyed to make way for the different requirements of the cotton, and the restoration of rice-irrigation will take years. Yet on the whole, he says, much of the plan worked out according to specification; though more so in European Russia than in Asia. Tchokaieff speaks from long and detailed knowledge, and of Soviet Turkestan as a whole, including Turkmenistan. Under the monarchy cotton-production grew and grew until by 1916 1,700,000 acres were under cultivation and 400 tons were produced annually. Cereals had been almost eliminated in consequence and all Turkestan was dependent on imports for its essential food-supplies. The Soviet continued this policy: their application of it elsewhere is merely an extension of the Imperial policy; both in cotton-production and also 'collectivization.' The Soviet carried the idea further by aiming at freeing the whole of the Union from dependence on supplies from North America, and at ability to compete with Egyptian cotton. Turkestan now therefore resembles Uzbekistan in having eliminated rice as well, and in becoming so dependent on outside supplies that the authorities can compel the unwilling to come into line by preventing anyone from receiving necessary imports unless he has delivered his quota of cotton. Yet the fight for wheat of their own growing continues. Sometimes, too, cotton is held back in order to exchange it for wheat secretly. Sometimes cotton gets burnt. In addition to what these two experts say, it has to be added that there is also the damage done by cotton extracting from the soil constituents that are needed for alternative crops, and by all possible forms of

antagonism and sacrifices incurred by over-hastiness, even when a case can be made out in its favour by its promoters. Steber, however, is a later observer than either of these two and has observed over a wider area. He notes a remedy being provided for impoverishment of the land by cotton by means of alternating it with lucerne crops; also that when the U.S.A. undertook to free themselves from dependence on Egypt it took years to discover the species best adapted to North American soils. Union experience has been similar. Beyond that, its agents have unearthed species that can flourish farther north than it was believed that cotton could flourish. Even by 1929 they were able to provide for home markets when foreign supplies ran short, and they persuade themselves that they can dominate the foreign market in the future while continuing to provide for the home market. Certainly, this calls for subordination of other demands which have a claim to be deemed urgent, besides vast expenditure of energy, skill, and subsidies. But, according to Steber, a Soviet Egypt is being created.

In connection with cotton, as with other commodities, transactions of 1940 are not noted. They were exceptional: either for war-purposes, or to exploit belligerents.

RUBBER. Experimenting has been in progress with rubber also. Plants have been fetched from Mexico, China, Japan, in order to acclimatize and develop the most adaptable, and whereas it has been the custom to think of rubber as only capable of maturing within 10° of the Equator, cultivation of it has been pushed farther north until they no longer regard even 30° as the limit. Nevertheless, the Soviet arranged with England to import rubber as a prime necessity for 1940.

TIN. Likewise tin, notwithstanding that one of their more reliable experts, Urvantsev, affirmed, years ago, that the quantity of tin obtainable in the north-east rivalled all

Bolivia's tin. None has yet been produced, apparently.

OIL. Oil has become politics rather than commerce. And when we try to ascertain what Russian oil is being marketed by their different agents, the Standard Oil, the Asiatic Petroleum Co., the Texas Oil Co., the Naphtha Syndicate, the Western Oil Distributing Co. (this last acting in India), where it comes from, where it goes to, how to trace the origin of marketed oil, what is the profit or loss, how much oil from Sakhalin goes to the Japanese fleet without putting in an appearance on the market, we come back to the conclusion we might have started with, namely, that the oil-world is mostly underworld and a subject better suited to a sensational novelist than to dry-as-dust research. What can be said is that during the earlier years of the period under consideration the output of oil increased, but that according to *Le Mois* for October 1939, as reliable a source as any, the yield has been diminishing so seriously that one of their star organizers has been appointed to sole control of oil in consequence.

GOLD. Concerning the Gold Trust there is, for once, sufficient knowledge, thanks to Littlepage; that is, from 1928–37. It resembled our Chartered Companies, except that it controlled various parcels of land instead of a single vast area. It has been the best managed of all the Soviet ventures, so much so as to become a model, a sort of laboratory for trial and error of the theories in vogue during that period. Some, such as the opposition to piece-work on principle, were not given up till 1935. Throughout the first ten years of Communist rule it had been an axiom that gold would lose its value: it might keep its place for filling teeth, the chief men thought, but otherwise might just as well be used in the construction of water-closets. Stalin changed all that as a result of his reading Bret Harte: coming to see in it both a useful commodity and a means of colonization. To

that end he chose one Serebrovsky, who hitherto had specialized in oil, to bring back from a tour in North America full details of what could be done. Serebrovsky posed as a professor. He executed his commission to perfection and was appointed head of the Gold Trust. He must have been a genius. Everything went well under him. He collected a more efficient staff than other heads were able to do, with the extra result that when the purging of the Party came, the Trust lost fewer men than did other ventures.

The Trust instituted its own broadcasting system, constructed its own roads, owned its own camels, reindeer, aeroplanes and shops. The shops were so good that thousands used to join up as workers solely that they might have the privilege of dealing at them: Littlepage remembered finding shops of theirs in out-of-the-way parts which would compare with any but the best shops outside the Union. It also operated roadside inns and restaurants in which anyone could be a customer. Staff, equipment and economic results improved every year. At first many a mine had to get on without a single competent man: but five-year courses turned out hundreds of adequately trained students and thousands of old hands were attracted back to the work which they knew well but had had to leave. In fact, the efficient staff grew so numerous that enough gold was not found to employ them; not because of shortage of gold but for want of efficient prospectors. These too were roped in in time; more old hands. The production-figure remained a secret: Littlepage believes the Union became the second largest producer in the world, though whether it would so continue was a different matter.

Gold rushes were encouraged but strictly controlled. Littlepage and his wife went about freely amongst the goldfields, never carrying a weapon and always greeted with hospitality. The Trust also carried out a colonization-policy,

with the object of strengthening the Far East and border-regions against the Japanese. When Littlepage was writing his book in 1937 news came to him that Serebrovsky had been arrested and had 'disappeared.'

OGPU AS BUSINESS. Another specimen of Chartered Company is the Ogpu, in its commercial capacity, except that it employs forced labour, whereas the Gold Trust employs, or did employ, 1928–37, free paid labour. There is nothing secret in this combination of slavery and big business as an activity of the Ogpu: every now and then it will be announced that, on completion of this and that enterprise, so many prisoners have been released; as, for instance, on July 5th, 1937, 55,000 were released on the completion of the Moscow–Volga canal. The Baltic–White Sea canal was constructed by the same means, and hundreds of thousands of prisoners were engaged on the double-tracking of 2,200 miles of Trans-Siberian railway during three Siberian winters. Tchernavin is a credible witness; after working in an enterprise as a free man, he worked on in it, after both it and he had been taken over by the Ogpu. He had a sound business head besides his scientific genius and presents us with a coherent account of the business side of the system. More than that, he is himself an example of their policy in heresy-hunts, namely, they took care to bring charges against skilled men in order to provide themselves with the most highly-skilled assistants. Littlepage, too, had knowledge of this method and incidentally came across much of the Ogpu's system, while never making any enquiries about it; he was always a man who regarded minding his own business as a whole-time job. But, as a manager, he saw for himself that, if they ran short of prisoners, peasants could be conscripted, that the Ogpu would not entrust their correspondence to the Government postal services but only to couriers of their own; that a single irresponsible accusation would be enough to

effect the disappearance of anyone, and that anyone who grumbled was especially liable to disappear. The authorities would maintain that this was all for the good of those concerned, but people didn't look at it in that light, all the more so when they considered the characteristics of those who disappeared and of those who went free. Much of the dissatisfaction so caused found vent in wrecking. Littlepage came across plenty of actual wrecking in the course of his inspections, and found, too, that if and when it did not exist the police had to invent some; since, if they did not, they were suspected of concealing it or promoting it. This state of things was a by-product of the series of civil wars which the Communist Party had been involved, or engaged, in; against the aristocracy, against the landowners, against farmers, against nomads. It had been most noticeable when fighting the farmers, the so-called 'kulaks,' when the more efficient were singled out for capture: also that the more-than-ordinary skill and character, which had made their earnings best worth confiscating, were pressed into the service of the Ogpu businesses by making the prisoners' release conditional on the energy and initiative prisoners showed.

By 1934 the Government were attempting to put a stop to all this: all such official conspiracies and ill-treatment were not only intended to be discontinued, but a new and more lenient treatment of all was announced. However, the vested interests came to the top in the end. The head of the police, Kirov, second only in power to Stalin, was assassinated. This led to an intensification of the existing system. The new agents had to show themselves more zealous than their predecessors. Amateurs assisted to serve their own ends. The head of the Ogpu was arrested in April 1937, and so it goes on.

The distinctive features of the Ogpu, as business people, resemble those features of 'capitalism' and slave-ownership

which are insisted on by anti-capitalists. They had no need to look to the future, but only to immediate profits: their workers were badly housed, because their buildings were temporary ones, different from those of the Union itself, which has the future to consider and wishes to do so. Neither were they bound by the limit of 8 per cent. profit by which the State bound itself. Having its own troops, jurisdiction, prisons, currency, laws, and shops, and no occasion to preserve the lives of their workers, they did make profits, and those huge, according to Tchernavin. They had no outlay on mechanization, no interest to pay on capital, no depreciation to provide for, nor redemption of debentures: their goods bear their trade-mark and it is not safe for a dissatisfied customer to complain.

Such examples of raw-material production, and of private enterprise, during a phase of swift transition under pressure of circumstances, will be enough. We can go on to what the State has tried to do, and been forced to do, under that same pressure. It may be summed up under three heads: I — Shortages to be met; II — Exporting and importing in the course of dealing with pressure and those shortages; III — How the money is found to meet deficits.

SHORTAGES. Everybody goes short of supplies in Soviet Asia. So they do in Soviet Europe. Even if you have the money to pay for what you want, you may go short of it there; or else it may be there and you may not be able to get permission to buy it. In most cases, no doubt, the reason is the same as with shortages we ourselves feel so keenly in our own individual cases, a lamentable deficiency of cash or credit on the part of the would-be purchaser; but, so far as evidence goes, that is, so far as the more articulate people are concerned, we hear of a surprisingly large proportion of cases where the cash is on offer and the goods not forth-

coming. Patience under privation: that is the outstanding feature of Soviet subjects to-day. But people who have been through so much civil war and through two famines in eleven years learn patience, and are thankful if privations are no worse than they are. I remember, in Mexico once, a man telling me of the state of things there and of the need for revolution; and on asking him why revolution did not happen, then, he answered, 'Well, most of us recollect too well seeing the bones of our friends whitening in the fields and we would rather put up with things as they are than have any more of that.'

And one famine breeds more famine. In one case, when relief grain was sent for sowing, the peasants ate it: more was sent, and soldiers to guard it; the soldier-guards ate that: it being by then too late for sowing grain, seed-potatoes were sent; the peasants sowed them by day and dug them up at night and ate those too. A Russian tale; but true enough, essentially, of Asia. Then, in spite of the biggest timber supply in the world, paper-shortage was so acute in 1935 that newspapers had to be restricted: apparently because saw-mills were so few and inefficient. Livestock is on the upgrade in quantity; staggering figures quotable may even be 50 per cent. true; but they do no more than replace what has been destroyed in famines or in despair. Soviet Asiatics feel land-shortage when the Tsarist policy is continued of allotting the most fertile lands to Russian settlers, or to obedient persons, in order to enforce compliance on the more independent. Production increases; but so do those who need food. Greatest shortage of all is the shortage of skilled men, and that affects standards of work, inasmuch as if a man is dismissed for unpunctuality or slackness, he can find another job immediately. This shortage extends to everybody and everything ancillary to every undertaking, and may be considered the dominant factor in exporting and importing, since no

article can be sent out of the country without depriving some one in it of something he wants and usually of something he needs.

EXPORTS AND IMPORTS. Except in cases like that of, say, rare metals which happen to be commanding fancy prices, no exporting from Soviet Asia is on an economic basis. Altogether, it is a position that is so dependent on fashionable beliefs about what is of value and what is not, and on political theory and emergencies, often on mere stunts, that it is open to endless controversial criticisms which lead nowhere. Another factor comes into the case, moreover: namely, that no separate treatment of Soviet Asia is practicable, since the European and Asian dominions are treated as a unit as regards exports and imports.

A great deal of breath, paper, irony, moralizing, and uplift are wasted on attacking and defending Soviet methods of doing business. They are as we are — unjust men striving with adversity: injustice and adversity being alike forced on both of us, consciously or unconsciously. The only choice we have is whether we shall be hypocrites or not. The Soviet system is committed to the view that the State should do the trading. The daily experience of English people is that while there are some few things which a government may be able to do fairly well and many which it can do fairly badly, trade is not one of them. Only traders can trade; and the more the Government tries to trade, the more it thinks it can do it and the less we think so. But we have to keep an open mind on the subject. As with Polar agriculture, cotton-growing, etc., if the Soviet experts had believed what existing experts elsewhere were sure of, they would never have attempted the experiments they have made good with. If we contrast strong points with strong points and weak with weak, we shall emerge with a chastened frame of mind that is clear only on two points: first, that we do not know enough to

decide; secondly, that we human beings are only in our infancy still, and ill-behaved brats at that.

Nothing in the Union is on a business-footing — not yet. The essence of far-sighted trading — is it not that your customer should be satisfied, even at a loss to yourself? The State as trader endeavours to satisfy itself: it may be short-sighted as business but is it not sound politics? A policy of forcing dwellers in a given district to grow what they can't eat and to eat what they don't grow and therefore can't always get, in place of managing their own affairs in their own way according to their own knowledge, does result in periodical famines and permanent disaffection; but how many government departments are there anywhere which are not thought of by their victims as primarily preoccupied with meddle and muddle?

Another factor which differentiates between business-business and State-business is regularity. It is in that respect that Soviet methods riot. Exports are made to subserve other purposes than building up a profitable connection; injury done to a competitor's sales, especially to a political competitor's sales, ranks as high as any other one factor: no matter if the supply of their goods is maintained at a loss or if it has to be suddenly withdrawn and their retailers discredited or ruined. Another prime requisite is the making of exports an excuse for despatching agents whose real commission is to stir up trouble either in the importing State itself or, indirectly, in some other State. Trade is not intended to follow the Red Flag: but the Red Flag to follow trade. The extent to which profitable business-relations enter into the question of exports and imports is shown by the fact that neither, for the whole Soviet territory, equal those of Malaya. Moreover, the tremendous rapidity with which Soviet business develops, when it does develop, at home, in some particular direction, entails sudden and tre-

mendous increases of imports of those materials which are incidental to production, to manufacture, to distribution, and to the housing and well-being of the employees. That shows up most clearly in relation to rubber and oil as used in transport.

Another feature of State trading is that when a given figure in production is fixed as a standard the producers see that it is needful to get as near that figure as may be for the sake of their own welfare, regardless of whether a market exists. This does lead to some grotesque situations: face-powder and city-shoes awaiting buyers in the Far North when the customers have been waiting for prime necessities for years and have said so: tooth-brushes sent to a group of aborigines in quantities which would last them for ten years supposing that all took to tooth-cleaning, whereas only 95 out of 1,620 could be induced to do so. But the chief factor that affects business and the capacity to import and export, from a business point of view, is the divided duty that the State perceives when it selects its staff for commerce: the right man for the Party may take precedence of the right man for the job; someone must always be on committees, in any case, to represent the Party and to make representations to the Party; and a check must always be kept, in addition, on Party men themselves and on technicians and workmen, by means of spies. Even if spies are absent, they are suspected of being present; and the work suffers accordingly. But there, once more, what nation can regard the Union as the only society in which such things go on daily?

It would, perhaps, become easier to arrive at a satisfactory guess at the total volume of trade in these parts if a succesion of quiet years also arrived. War in China and elsewhere, the artificialities of German dealings, the purely economic displacements and deadlocks, nationalist upheavals affecting imports and exports, stultify most such estimates, or checks

on estimates; even such sources as the traffic-returns via the Suez Canal ceased to throw sidelights which are truly sidelights. But some few test-cases exist. If, for instance, exploitation of Siberia had proceeded far, the Japanese would have attacked Siberia rather than China; they had an introduction to it in their exploitation of the Siberian coast and in their half of the island of Sakhalin. And then, in the island itself, the Japanese half has prospered and the Soviet half has not; at any rate, by comparison. Here, once more, controversy or enquiry would become puzzling. The Japanese would ascribe their success, in public, to the virtues of the Mikado, and in private to their own; while the Union would give details to the effect that the Japanese half was backwardness itself and its inhabitants mourning their fate, compared with northern Sakhalin; and allow no one in to check this evidence. A survey of printed information about Sakhalin will be found in *Economic Geography* for January 1939: insufficient to prove anything either way, but tending to confirm that Japan is ahead.

One thing, however, is agreed: they are working for the future and the present has got to make good many deficits. Where, then, does the money come from to meet these deficits?

FINANCE

The Party has made many presents to the Republics. During the nineteenth century, and up to 1916, English money was lent to Russia to the extent of nearly 2,000 million pounds sterling when the purchasing-power of the pound was, on the average, four times what it is now. It is useless to give money-figures without indicating what the purchasing-power of the figures is at present and therefore other amounts lent (those, for instance, by the Japanese and

the French), cannot be defined so clearly. For purposes of a rough estimate, the total of other loans may be put at the equivalent of the English amount. When all the interests engaged in helping themselves out of the negotiation of a foreign loan have helped themselves, the proportion of it for which the inhabitants of the borrowing country receive value may be reckoned as about 50 per cent. Taking the net amount of the rough estimate thus arrived at, the present which the Party made to the Republics may be put at 6,000 million pounds in to-day's valuations. And then, of course, there is the interest-charge saved annually, while the railways, etc., obtained with the money remain where they were.

The chief task that the Party set itself was the re-distribution of earth and water. The latter is of greater importance in Soviet Asia than the former because whoever controls the water controls the land. This implied the confiscation of private property up to values which no one but an economist would state in figures. The next process was to extract the more easily hidden riches. This was effected principally with the aid of the 'Torgsin' shops which would sell necessaries at luxury-prices: but only in exchange for gold, or for valuables, such as pictures, which had a foreign-exchange value. Relatives in distress in Soviet territory could also obtain remittances from relatives abroad (i.e., more foreign exchange) through the 'Torgsin.' It was found profitable to maintain these shops in existence till as late as 1936. During the earlier part of this period foreign exchange was a prime necessity, since the need to purchase abroad was an essential in preventing misery rising to such a pitch as would make counter-revolution inevitable. The English public also came to the rescue by paying £100,000 for a biblical manuscript whose religious and scholarship value was — what? And also by buying Ogpu slave-made goods under falsified trade-marks.

After tiding over this interval the next step was to take away the private property of those who had been thriving during this interval. These were labelled with an ugly name, 'kulak,' and every community was expected — more than expected — to denounce some of its members as kulaks. Anyone who owned more than his neighbours automatically qualified for becoming a kulak: sometimes for sound reasons, sometimes not. Each community as a whole suffered, since it meant the disappearance or despair of those members who were endowed with more than the average of initiative or foresight or thriftiness. But the Soviets gained.

Meanwhile the United States of North America had been buying gold as soon as anyone dug it out of the ground and burying it again in their own country, thereby forcing up the price. The genius of Serebrovsky, referred to under the heading of the 'Gold Trust,' enabled the Union to press this advantage home — another present. This North American gold-policy has been a main factor in whatever degree of stability and power the Party has attained. And all the while trade with North America was being withdrawn and transferred to Germany because Germany was prepared to grant more favourable credit-terms. An analysis of such terms will be found in the *Slavonic Review* for November 1935: subsequent developments have been on similar lines. The complexity of these may be gathered from the fact that a single agreement, that of 1925, was the subject of a volume of 372 pages of small print. Since then the discounting, re-discounting, collateral security, extensions, price-fixings, modifications, etc. etc., would entail many more volumes to explain their bearings and ramifications, and much would have to be left unexplained. Many German firms would undertake no business in connection with these agreements because the government did not guarantee above 70 per cent. of the values, leaving the manufacturer with a 30 per cent.

risk. Clauses that the Soviet negotiators managed to get passed unnoticed enabled their agents to introduce price-changes to their advantage, so much so that the central authority could buy and sell abroad as for the German market and do so at a profit even after buying foreign exchange for that purpose. In 1932 the Union was on the verge of default and supplementary support from Germany had to be forthcoming in order to stave that off. Currency fluctuations complicated matters further. On the whole, increase of productiveness in the Soviets seems to have maintained solvency on their part; that is, governmental solvency, which is the same thing as what in a private individual is called bankruptcy. The balance of trade has moved in their favour. No balance-sheet, of course, could ever be made out for these transactions: but the general effect can be defined by saying that while an indefinite number of individuals can be ruined or killed off, abroad or at home, by these transactions, the Soviet administration and, indirectly, the general state of the country, thrive on them. An item of evidence in favour of this view is that as early as 1934 the Swedish Government, as canny a government as any in Europe or outside it, agreed to an eight-year loan. Who is going to be the gainer on that 'loan' on the due date, in 1942?

As to German money, that was not all German. Some unknown proportion of it was English, lent or granted to the Germans, either by way of suspension of German liabilities or otherwise. All this money is lost to English and German lenders and has been presented, so far as values go, to the Republics by the Union. As to Japan, threats of war, in some concealed and disownable form, come to the front whenever the situation favours the Union. Once their purpose is attained the threats are exchanged for proposals of commercial treaties, involving credits in which the advantage

rests with the Union, and which discount, perhaps cancel, the payments for services rendered in the Far-Eastern provinces by Japanese individuals and firms — very valuable services.

Summing up, it may be concluded that miscalculations in Japan, quarrels in Europe, demoralization of the United States of North America, have represented much luck for the Union. Yet it would seem to be a more reasonable conclusion, and certainly a safer one, to consider the decisive factor to be a shrewdness which will prove adaptable to any changed conditions that may arise.

Many criticisms of Soviet trading-customs, valid enough within their limits, fall to the ground and mislead us if we do not take into account that conditions for them and for us are to some extent not merely not comparable, but exact opposites. In Great Britain is it not that the character of its imports and the quantity of its exports are the vital matters; whereas in the Union it is rather the quantity of its imports and the character of its exports that matter — in other words, the latter sends out what is calculated to damage competitors rather than to drive a good bargain, and imports only what it is in need of, while Great Britain lives by importing much that is to be manufactured and sent out of the country again to bless him that gives and him that takes, in the course of trade that is meant to ensure further trade as much as present profits?

As to internal finance, many formalities are gone through, many appearances kept up. It would be out of place to take them seriously here. One example may stand for all. On the Eastern (Turkestan) frontier, traders have to sell for roubles but do not receive more than a part of the price in cash: they are credited with the rest and have to accept payment in goods, the Russian dealers doing all the reckoning, both in roubles and in every class of goods both bought and

sold, because the Turkestan traders have no other market. Valuations of the rouble are so arbitrary and unstable that a trader may find some later trader being enabled to buy the same kind of goods as he has bought on terms that enable the second trader to undersell the first. Here the valuation of the rouble varies according to discriminations against individuals, and bribery.

The foregoing fragmentary, brief, crude understatements significant of how money-matters go in the Union make up those Lazarus-rags of reality which are here preferred to the Abraham's bosom of academic slang. All that need be added is that many West-European terms are in use, such as 'loans,' 'security,' 'subscribed,' and so on: all connote different ideas and practices from any to be found in our dictionaries. 'Lottery' is an exception: and it is likewise a reality that interest on State bonds was reduced to 4 per cent. (from 8 per cent.) in September 1936; 4 per cent. nominal, that is: but including the cost of lottery-prizes, the Government has to pay about $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. on its borrowings.

On the other hand, during the last ten years the number and productiveness of the inhabitants has gone on increasing, and the internal economic resources may have been correspondingly and cumulatively improving. Another fact is that practically every valuable mineral has been discovered within the Union, and that, therefore, if demand springs up for any such a one at inflated prices, the Union has at least a sporting chance of competing in the world-market with it.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS, ESTIMATES, AND FIGURES

KUSNETSK AND AFTER. One of the best advertised ventures of the Union has been the conversion of two areas thirteen hundred miles apart into an interdependent unit, the one

half supplying coal and the other the iron-ore. The two together raised the metallurgical industry to the second most important industry; agriculture being first. It is best known under the name of the Kusnetsk, which, strictly speaking, applies to the coal end, an end which extends to Krasnoyarsk, north of Tanna-Tuva. The iron-ore and metallurgical end is that which the Stroganovs discovered and began to exploit. Both are tapped and linked up by the Trans-Siberian Railway from where it leaves Europe to where it crosses and connects the upper reaches of both the Ob and the Yenisei rivers, and their most navigable sections. These two rivers add hydro-electric power to the assets of the undertaking. The eastern end also contains the chief copper-bearing districts in the Union, and many other valuable and supplementary potentialities and actualities as well.

The two areas together include all the regions which are least liable to invasion and most central for all purposes. Equally characteristic of the ideas at work is the distance between its two co-operating centres, about three times the length of England between the fuel and the forge: the distance between Paris and the Sahara. Nothing has recently been added to our knowledge of the present and future of this venture differing from what is known of its past, that is, that production has been greatly increased with all the advantages and disadvantages accruing in such a case. It does imply, e.g., enormous growth in incidental industries in the Asian centre, the capital of which is Novosibirsk, mainly in connection with the feeding, housing, etc., of increased populations. The surest guide to these, then, will be the census-figures which will be dealt with at the end of this chapter. In contrast with these figures, and in contrast with all that is to be read about the Kusnetsk elsewhere, is the fact that the planning of 1939 for the years to come includes no such planning as the above: rather the contrary. The

newer plans are for building small-scale factories in hundreds of places where efficiency and output can be combined by using local materials to supply local demands and by independence of materials brought from a distance, especially cement and fuel. Such factories are more quickly built, and more quickly reach production.

USEFUL STATISTICS. When it comes to selecting some figures which possess some modicum of trustworthy significance it needs to be kept in mind that the bulk of the population in Central Asia of the Soviets are tinged with, or dyed in, Muhammadanism and that therefore increased production of what Muslims will willingly indulge in, will stand for goods which are likely to be used to the full, which tend to reconcile enemies to the Union, make friends for it, and generally establish the real and abiding economy of diminishing the discontent incidental to fast and furious innovations and a sense of hardship and unreasonableness. Of all modern products, electricity is that which is most welcome to Muslims. The wheat-harvest, commercial motors, and freight-traffics, are other items which constitute test-cases. Commercial motors, including as they do harvesting-machinery, form an item particularly to the point inasmuch as the harvesting-season is a short one and the speed wherewith the crop can be harvested regulates not only the crop which can be stored in sound condition, but also the area which can profitably be sown. The following figures are taken from the Statistical Yearbooks of the League of Nations for 1938 and 1939; as reliable a source as any. They have been checked from other sources, and in no case do the figures tally; but the rate of increase shown, which is the main point, is akin in all cases.

	1929	1937
Electricity-production (in millions of kilowatt-hours) . . .	6·224	36·400

	1928	1937
Wheat (millions of tons)	21·9	442·0

(But owing to drought the crop for 1938 is said to have fallen to two-thirds of the 1937 crop; wheat had to be imported month after month to make up the deficiency.)

	1929	1937
Commercial motors (thousands) . . .	1	181

	1930	1937
Freight-traffics (ton-kilometres, millions) . . .	133·918	354·800

All these figures stand equally for an increase in each succeeding year. For comparison's sake it may be noted that, taking the last two items, and the corresponding quantities in Canada, the figures for 1931 to 1937 were lower in every year than they were for the year 1930 in Canada. Yet it has also to be noted that the increase in railway-mileage within the Union during this period has been no more than 5,000, according to the 'Russian Economic Notes,' issued from Washington (January 15, 1940).

So far as luxuries go, figures are available showing up a tenfold increase over these same ten years. Such figures may be approximately accurate, but they must needs be taken in conjunction with the personal experience of those who have been in Central Asia recently. A man may be rich there without being able to move about otherwise than on foot for want of either cars, cabs, or trams: unable, too, to obtain what we should deem decent housing for a poor person. Much other similar statistical information is to be obtained from the sources quoted and from the Birmingham University publications on Russian economic conditions. All of it points in the same direction and is subject to similar qualifications. An example of how it is to be read may be taken from the revision of working hours early in 1940. The six-day week and the seven-hour day were scrapped in favour of longer working-hours because increases of wages caused

increased demand for goods, and the Government refused to consider lowering the standard of living. The fact was that more hands were wanted for munitions.

THE CENSUS OF 1939. The census of January 19, 1939, represents an advance in census-taking. Two counts were taken; one of those actually present at the time, and another of those permanently domiciled in the same place. These two acted as a check on each other: the divergence is claimed to be no more than 0·06 per cent. The previous census was that of 1926: but as it took place at the end of the year the census of 1939 stands for a twelve-year, not a thirteen-year, period. It was announced that results would be issued about the middle of 1940, which would have been a shorter interval than previous counts had taken. The figures were, in fact, available (in Russian) in July 1939.

It is not to be supposed that any Russian or Asian census-figures could be accurate. Alien peoples cannot be expected to make census-returns with any desire for truth, but only according to their hopes or fears. Besides, those who are nomadic will be up and off over a frontier as soon as the rumour comes of officials approaching. It may, however, be reckoned that, like similar figures in other countries, they will stand for somewhat less than the true figures; with a wider discrepancy, perhaps, in Soviet Asia than elsewhere. In the following statistics the nearest round numbers are given: by that means the illusion of accuracy is avoided, and approximate realization of the facts suggested.

The outstanding fact is that the rural population of the whole Union had declined since 1926 from 121 to 115 millions; while the urban population had increased from 26 to 56 millions. Nevertheless it is to be noted that the rate of increase in the urban population was higher in between the two previous censuses (1897–1920), a period of twenty-three years, than between 1926–39. In the republics of

Central Asia there was a rise from just under 14 millions to just under 17 millions: two millions in the towns and one million in the country. Comparisons between urban areas are less likely to be misleading than comparisons between rural areas, since the latter are more affected by famines and by alterations in boundaries. Moreover, the whole Union system being one of proletariats, proletariats have to be created where none existed, and the means thereto is urbanization. Then, too, what they aim at is a townsman's idea of civilization. Consequently it is in the growth of towns that their census reflects most truly the alterations in the population of the Union and what degree of the success aimed at is being attained.

Confining ourselves to Asia, the chief alteration is in Stalinsk — from 4,000 to 169,000. Stalinsk is in the Kusnetsk area. The capital of that area, Novosibirsk, shows a rise from 120,000 to 405,000. Increases in town-figures stand for more migration than increases in the countryside, on account of contraception being more practised in towns. But migrations, settlement of nomads, and decreased infant-mortality are all upsetting items, especially in Central Asia. It is, indeed, difficult to make comparisons that are enlightening without their being stultified or invalidated by concealed factors, but it is perhaps worth while saying that the five Central Asian Soviets cover about half the measurements of Australia and contain about two and a half times as many persons; and are increasing in numbers at about the same rate. And that the area of the whole of the Union amounts to more than double that of the United States of North America, while the population is larger by about 25 per cent.; the rate of increase being about the same in that case also.

Conclusion. In summing up as to the economic situation of the Union as a whole — since the separate prosperity

of Soviet Asia is bound up with that of the whole at present — the judgments of those who are best qualified to judge had better be quoted. One of those is Fuad Kazak, whose book on Turkestan has already been referred to. He thinks that Soviet trading does not reach the scale of pre-war Russian trade in the East 1891–1912: but that dominating positions have been reached by political means. More recent still, and certainly among the soberest and best-informed, are the *Tijdschrift voor Economische Geographie*, *Le Mois*, and the *Economist*.

The Dutch source published an article in March 1939 by A. M. W. van Renesse on Soviet Asia, the gist whereof is that while no figures can be accepted as reliable, it remains clear that much has been achieved; nevertheless, the present is a minor matter compared with the significance for the future. *Le Mois*, in the September of 1939, in the course of considering how much assistance the Union could afford Germany, inferred that many hindrances would ensue to obstruct assistance and also that there were many difficulties in ascertaining the facts of the case, but that we get to know everything in time and that, on the whole, it is evident that agricultural output there has been steadily on the upgrade and that the Union is rapidly becoming a great industrial Power. On January 6, 1940, the *Economist* adds:

'. . . an unprejudiced observer could not fail to be impressed with the solid gains that have been recorded, with the technical and educational advance, and with the slow realization of long-prepared design. When every adverse factor has been recorded, it is nevertheless true that this amazing experiment in regulating the lives of nearly 180 million people, and that the very fact of its doing so, setting the measure aside, is evidence of considerable success. The peoples of the U.S.S.R. may suffer privations unique in

modern history: the fact remains that they are suffering less with every year that passes, and that their standard of living is on the upward move — slowly enough, perhaps, but still in the right direction.'

(The *Economist's* estimate of 180 millions no doubt includes those people whose destinies the Union is at present deciding without their being enrolled among Soviets; i.e., Outer Mongolia and Chinese Turkestan.) All the more to the point, then, is this final quotation which likewise includes these same peoples: it comes from Sir Aurel Stein, an authority second to none on Central Asia. He writes as late as 1933 (*On Central Asian Tracks*)

'from the modern point of view the economic and political importance of these lands in the heart of Asia is small.'

Such general estimates should be subjected to one particular test; the more so since this particular test applies to every competitor the Union has. This test is the production of machine-tools. Every single State, in so far as it aims at material and scientific efficiency, is subject to 'bottle-neck' strangulation and to suicide if its production of machine-tools, and its capacity for expansion of that industry, are not equal to all the demands of each section of its undertakings, all at once. Failure in this direction means stoppages and disheartenment at critical times. Now in *Pravda* for February 27, 1940, occurs one of those characteristic Russian articles; and it is about the manufacture of machine-tools. Fantastic advances are scheduled therein, as regards the near future, combined with evidence that none of the essentials of the plans supposed to be in operation have occurred. Plants are only producing half of the new kinds of tools required and commissioned: they maintain quantity of output only by virtue of producing those kinds which

they found easiest to produce; putting off the more difficult jobs indefinitely. There is also the custom of slowing down, and then having a rush to fulfil orders. This must not happen, the newspaper demands; all plans can be fulfilled if there is less talk and more work.

But, as Serebrovsky remarked to Littlepage, 'We are only beginning.'

THE ANTI-GOD MOVEMENT

A bitterly disappointed man is Yaroslavsky, who has been leading the Anti-God Movement from its beginning till 1937. The year 1937 is specified because he then issued a manifesto celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the Movement. Therein he rendered an account of its progress and shortcomings and appealed for a fresh start. A summary of this report will be found in Volume XVI of the *Slavonic Review*. Some information of more recent date is to be found in various numbers of the *Tablet* during the last two years.

During the previous six years, Yaroslavsky complains, periodicals and personal effort have sunk into reprehensible laxness: most of those whose bounden duty it is to further the Movement do nothing; neither factory managements, nor libraries, nor even the Young Communists themselves, take interest in the Union of the Godless. Yaroslavsky is sure from the data in front of him that no more than half of the town-workers are against religion nor more than one-third of the country folk. The remainder are believers; not only the old, but the younger ones too. Great new towns grow up without a church: but that does not mean without believers. Thousands of churches are closed; but only to become a new source of peril: the dispossessed priest becomes a travelling missionary, all that is needed for ritual being so easily packed into small space. He is welcomed

everywhere. He marries those who have committed secular marriage; baptizes the unbaptized; sings masses for the dead. The greater the suffering, the greater the faith. Congregations have grown up that adhere to the Church because they believe in it, whereas the adherents of days gone by adhered for what they could get out of it. Even officials are in sympathy with the priests to the extent that the priests are not afraid to approach them. In early years the Movement had such marvellous success. Now it is necessary to warn its supporters that the old methods will no longer do: they must cease to antagonize believers; must study them and wean them gently away.

The reviewer in the *Slavonic Review*, Sir Bernard Pares, comments that he does not understand why the authorities are anti-Christian, seeing that Jesus Christ was a 'proletarian who lived with and worked for the poor and was for that reason condemned as a revolutionary to the death of a slave by one of the most powerful capitalist systems known to history,' and quotes two testimonies to the value of Communism, spoken by priests and mentioned in Yaroslavsky's report.

'Sensible and clever,' so one priest described the Communist youth, and those of them who belonged to a 'believing' home would carry out what father and mother told them, even though they were punished for so acting. 'What material!' says that priest; while the other priest, once a leading Communist, but subsequently one of the foremost champions of Christianity, speaks of the anti-religious movement as having arisen on the basis of a search for the truth of life, for the Kingdom of God on earth, with an apocalyptic tenseness of faith in the future and with a sincere desire to realize it, concluding, 'And we may hope that for the future this will not be displeasing to God and will not be turned to shame.'

During the winter of 1937–8 the Union of the Godless was relieved of its unworthy members, re-organized and endowed with more money; and a new edition of the anti-religious text-book was issued, revised. The previous edition, of which 700,000 copies had been taken into use of some description or other, had been out of print for five years. Propaganda was given a less offensive, more seriously-minded, turn, stressing that religion promises an illusory happiness in a future non-existent Paradise, teaches that all is dependent on the will of a non-existent god, and sanctifies the inequality of women with men. The new programme is against religion in place of being directed against believers; and permission to re-open churches is to be granted more freely.

The foregoing applies primarily to Europe and to the Orthodox Church. To some extent it applies to Asia, that is, to Russians in Asia and to the attitude towards religion in general. But it needs supplementing, and that in two diverse ways. One is that much of the population of Soviet Europe never was 'Orthodox' but shares Asiatic beliefs. The other is that Soviet Asia is largely Muhammadan. Head-on collisions with Muhammadan spokesmen was the Party policy in the past: Littlepage often found mullahs and holy men working in the mines, sent there because they had been upholding the social organization of the nomads. That is the Party policy no longer. It is primarily an economic affair — will it pay to be anti-Allah, or anti-mullah, either at home or abroad?

Moscow still holds that religion is a stumbling-block in the way of progress, an evil because every statement in every creed is a falsehood and, as such, petrifies the critical sense and perverts it for life; it contends that any religious-minded person is thereby deprived of the means of forming accurate opinions about anything. And religion may still be thought

of as an opponent from whom quarter would neither be asked nor granted. But it is, after all, but one dogma among many and a minor one now. Both sides, it will be admitted, were over self-conscious about the super-excellence of their cause and the super-badness of their opponents' cause; and turned a blind eye on black sheep. Arguments on both sides ran on the familiar lines of — Give a noun a bad adjective and hang it. Consequently there are still many misunderstandings in suspense, so to speak, in the controversial air; and fogging it.

To quote a single example, there is the term 'atheist.' Extremists and anti-extremists revel in the term so uproariously that moderate people cannot hear themselves think. If they could, would they not dismiss it as a mere term of abuse, 'full of sound and fury, signifying nothing'? The dictionary affirms that it does signify something, namely, a person who does not believe in God. But the number of definitions of God runs into thousands, so that no one can well avoid being confronted with several score which he must hesitate to reject, or will even find admissible. Surely the term, as a term usable in real life, should be atheologist, i.e., a person who does not believe in what a theologian believes? Well, who does? And certainly, in disbelieving in what any given theologian believes, we have the support of every other theologian? The reddest Communist, then, is as multiple a theist as the humblest hanger-on of any cathedral-close, and as tainted with orthodoxy as with heresy. It is all very complicated, isn't it?

To us — yes: but to many Russians and to most Asiatics, it is quite simple. They dismiss us and it with expectorations, curses, contempt, and the sign which protects against the evil eye. To many Russians? Yes. Here again we come upon the vast forests as a factor in Russian life, and especially in that side of Russian life which provides the continuity

and stability of Russia in Asia. Follow Slonim in his wanderings and you will continually be happening on communities, in 1937, tucked away in forests, and therein and thereby preserving their ancient costumes and customs, speech and traditions, and, in religion, worshipping, say, Umo and Keremet and hosts of minor spirits; sometimes fire, water, and trees, and, even alongside of Mother Volga herself, Buddha. And then Slonim will be found speaking of what kind of people these heathens are, always referring to them as the flower of the Russian flock, robust in mind and body, independent, pleasant, peaceful, amongst whom murder and theft are unknown and where women preserve that ancient liberty which Christian women have either lost or have regained so recently that they do not quite know what to do with it.

Not surprising, therefore, that boys and girls swept from these families by the tide of Communism find 'godlessness' an indecency best left alone and anti-Church Militancy a side-issue. And when they carry what is then left of their new gospel into Asia and find themselves despised, as Russians, by 'backward' Nature-worshippers who know how to behave as well as their own fathers and mothers do at home and contrast the behaviour of their brothers-in-hot-gospel with this other behaviour, will they not find that during the last fifteen years a current of opinion has set in in favour of tolerance? They will; and they do.

Besides, this hostility leads to better instruction and behaviour on the part of those whom the Communists of fifteen years ago thought of, and still think of, as blind leaders of the blind. How could they dispute with the better-instructed of Muhammad's followers, with their practical and intellectual standards — Expect of a man what he is able to do, etc. — What have they got to say which can stand up to their Mongol subjects' idea of life and death, that a person is as

a musical instrument: the instrument must and will perish but the memory of its music may linger on?

Other gods against whom they fight are the spirits whose mediums are the 'shamans.' They are invariably spoken of as degraded impostors. But the ministers of a rooted religion serve other purposes than those of which their backbiters are aware. Do you know Pirandello's story of 'The Changeling'? A child so altered by convulsions that the mother is convinced that the witches have substituted another for it and stolen hers? The village sorceress sees that no truth she can tell will be believed; she assures the mother that her child is well and happy in the care of the witches but that its health depends on the care she takes of the changeling.

Mention of the 'vecchia religione' which has as strong a hold to-day in Italy as in the days of Theocritus may remind us of the existence of old religions all over Europe now whose persistence suggests that the Communists are but one more set of revivalists, so far as the anti-God Movement is concerned, who cannot avoid the fate, and are finding they cannot avoid the fate, of other dogmatists whose dogmas have not the daily support of contact with the elements. They have failed against Christianity, and they know it now; and how brittle and shallow is organized Christianity, State-introduced, State-maintained, compared with Nature-worship! In Holy Russia itself it is of recent origin, the only Russian group which turned Christian more than a thousand years ago having turned Muhammadan in the seventeenth century. One thousand years is not enough for a State-supported religion to take root. Scandinavian and Shetland Isles fishermen who pray to Christ on land still pray to Odin when in distress at sea.

Among the Tadjiks, too, according to Pilniak, survives another belief so powerful that gold cannot be prevented

going over the border in tribute. He tells how one Russian was pestered by a woman to sell her the gold-filling in his teeth in order that she might pay her religious dues, and when all other offers failed she brought her daughter to offer to him. This gold was to go to the Aga Khan, who has his faithful followers in Soviet Asia as well as in the other empire. Cannot even the Party control the anti-God movement when gold itself is at stake? Or is it that they grudge nothing to the only god who has ever taken a University degree?

Thus it will be seen that Yaroslavsky and what disciples he has left have a big job on hand, and that they are in the reverse case from Joshua, seeing that they are afraid and dismayed because the Lord God of their enemies is with them whithersoever they go. Can it be that he might find guidance in England? Might we suggest to him, Open the *Statesman's Yearbook* and see that the population of England and Wales is 42 millions but that the membership of Christian sects is under 5 millions of adults, plus a similar number of those under the age of consent? In his own country there are, he fears, more than 50 per cent. believers: whereas in ours barely 20 per cent. But he is speaking of the 'Orthodox' Church: the corresponding figure for the Church of England is 10 per cent., counting in the children; and that in spite of its prestige and subsidies. It is, at any rate, clear that the inhabitants of the Soviets are two and a half times as Christian as the British.

What, then, should Yaroslavsky have done? Introduced capitalism? Or avoided propaganda? He still seems at a loss for a method. By June 1940 4,000 priests had been deported from Soviet Poland to Siberia. In other words there had been that much religious propaganda introduced into Siberia — from Yaroslavsky's point of view; and introduced there by Government orders. But his unsympathetic supe-

riors had regarded those priests as political agents in Poland and as 'colonizers' in Siberia.

What, in fact, is at issue throughout the Soviets under many terminologies is here familiar only under the terminology of Western Christianity. It is a wider issue than the latter. The issue is that of promises; valid or no. Both sides claim that the promises of their opponents are irredeemable. The Communists have the asset that they have not been in power long enough for irredeemableness to be proved against them. Some of their promises have even been made good: and others are a fair gamble. They claim further that no promise made by shaman, mullah, or any other variety of priest, has ever yet been shown to have been redeemed, in spite of the fact that an endless succession of priesthoods have been making these same promises to an endless succession of generations; and have made their living out of making promises. Of course, the Communists say much more than that, but we need not repeat such rude remarks, especially as all are the commonplaces of controversies between the Christian sects themselves. We may stop at that essential point — whose promises are valid, if any? And here crops up another advantage of which the Saints of Communism can avail themselves as against the Communion of Saints, that of shifting their ground. It sounds, to non-theologians, an unfair advantage; but no doubt all is fair in love and religion. Paradises cannot compete with Cleopatras: age does wither and custom stale their infinite sameness; whereas those who are achieving public — or publicity — careers can, indeed must, promise something different to every decade. What dictator now would dare to promise a proletariat no more than Marx held out? Much more so in Soviet Asia, where electricity may be the terror of one week and the domestic pet of the next, and a new world opening in every book!

COMMUNICATIONS

That the railways are the weakest spot in the Soviet organization is the only item on which all observers are agreed. This was recognized afresh in 1935 when Lazar Kaganovitch, the organizer-in-chief, was taken away from other work and set to putting the railways on a suitable footing. A report had been issued stating that in 1934 there had been 62,000 accidents, and 12,000 more in January and February 1935. In 1934 hundreds had been killed and thousands injured, 7,000 locomotives smashed or damaged, 4,500 cars smashed, 60,000 damaged. The report added that most of these casualties were due to carelessness: discipline, control, and the instilling of a sense of responsibility were going to be taken in hand. Some improvement is said to have been effected. Kaganovitch subsequently left to take up other work, retaining his reputation. He was re-appointed in 1938. Many new railways are talked about, but actual construction lags behind other efforts, and, in fact, holds them up: increased production anywhere means that the surplus has either got to be consumed locally or else marketing cannot be arranged for lack of transport.

Any enquiry into why the weakest point of a people is so weak is apt to lead only to vague philosophizing productive of abstract reasoning masquerading as concrete, which ends in a description which purports to be an explanation. 'My people love to have it so': and there an end.

Contributory causes can be identified in this case. One is the difficulty in constructing and running railways on the frozen soils and subsoils and amidst the frozen temperatures which Russian engineers and railway-staff encounter over half of the surface of Soviet Asia throughout half the year and, at intervals, through a large proportion of the remainder. Another cause may be that river-basis of Russian

human geography. Most of the railway-plans in hand and proposed are based on the linking-up of rivers; the potentialities of these schemes hinge on the development of hydro-electric power along the rivers to supply the railways with the means of moving their rolling-stock along their lines. Coal has to be brought from so far, on most stretches of line, that perhaps no train, however overloaded, can be run except at a loss at present.

Another hindrance is the length of distances by rail, incurring a custom of allowing every passenger by many of the trains the right to a sleeping-berth as part and parcel of his ticket. There may be more right than berth about the custom, but, given the custom, it becomes unavoidable that tickets should not be issued until the train is arriving (which may be, and generally is, hours after it is due), and that travellers should wait about and get accustomed to refusals, perhaps for days together. Camping out on platforms is by no means unusual. The demands on time and patience, the struggles to get in when a train does turn up, the discomforts of the carriages, are all on the fantastic side. And what with there being no competition and everyone taking these things for granted, there is not the least likelihood of any of the railways pulling their weight, so to speak, in the economics of the whole region.

Travel by rail was always cheap, and since costs mount up and up and fares are reduced, the deficits must be equally fantastic. River services are cheaper still, but mostly exist on paper only: more numerous than formerly, however, and probably increasing. Perhaps the best way of stating the problem is to say that of what is required to give the people and the industries and the resources of Soviet Asia an adequate transport-service, according to our notions, no more than 99 per cent. remains to be done. How difficult it may be to tackle that deficiency may be illustrated by one pro-

posal in Kazakstan where one question is whether to divert a river into flowing into its old bed and provide a river-service, or to convert the dry river-bed into a railway. The surroundings of the bed are sands: they do not fill up the bed in winter because rains are enough to render the sand too heavy to blow into it, while the summer sand-storms are kept out of the bed by the heat causing a current of hot air to rise from the sunken bed and form a barrier to the sand. If the bed is converted into a railway-line, what sort of travelling would it make in the summer? — and if it is re-converted into a river and the hot air-current done away with, what is to prevent the river from filling up with sand?

Aviation is often the best, or sole, means of covering distances. Workmen are sometimes transported many hundreds of miles from the nearest station to their work, work which could not be undertaken otherwise. Nine-seater aeroplanes, slow and heavy, but best suited to local conditions, are in use: skilfully, if recklessly, handled. Air prices are fixed on a basis not exceeding top-price railway tickets. How much extra beyond the cost of the ticket, whether by rail, river, or air, needs to be allowed for in the way of bribes in order to obtain a ticket when one is wanted, is one of those features of Soviet money-matters that makes calculations about the value of the rouble so hazardous.

There does not seem to be anything to say about motor-traffic for the public which differs materially from what is going on among other regions and peoples in similar stages of development.

As to the future, a more apposite point of view, as always when considering the future, is whether the weakest point is not going to end as the source of the strongest point — in the future. The disadvantages that Muscovites are at as transporters may lead to them leading the world in chemurgy.

As 'chemurgy' is a comparatively new term, it will be as well to define it. Chemurgy is the transmutation of products — particularly agricultural products — from unusable forms into usable forms: say, from unsaleable fruit into citric acid, or unsaleable milk into metal-plastics or into casein fibre for textiles; and soya bean into almost anything. There is apparently no limit to such potentialities, potentialities which will enable workers to live as agriculturists instead of misdirecting them into mines or towns, and will supersede the discontent that ensues from people noting undistributed food alongside unsatisfied hunger. The fact is patent at present that our costs of transporting food are so high that much of it has to be wasted instead of consumed. Is it not likely that where the transport is most deficient — as amongst the Soviets — it will be there that chemurgy will become most used? In developing, that is, a custom of converting food-surpluses on the spot into forms both transportable and profitable?

No doubt it will be said that this is one form of 'Europeanization.' This latter term is another of those controversial, question-begging terms which, in this book, at any rate, it is desired to put out of use. There is nothing novel, or peculiar to one continent, or one gospel, in improving technique; or in applying scientific method. It has been an essential in developing civilization, in all its branches, spiritual included, wherever civilization has been developed during the last 40,000 years or more. Only in the rapidity of such applications during the nineteenth century in Europe did competitors compete more obviously on those lines than previously, and in the twentieth century they are part and parcel of all governmental and individual effort wherever effort is being made.

WOMEN

Whereas Communications remain the unsoundest link in the Union's activities, its dealings on behalf of the women may be called the soundest. The Union has, in effect, invented a new Beatitude, Blessed are the weak, for they shall inherit the earth. The women have been the weakest class in Soviet Asia. They did, and they do, a larger share in the daily work there than the men: the rule of polygamy for men and monogamy for women is primarily an economic rule. Women may have likewise lived a more defenceless, more oppressed, life than in most other places. In spite of all the diversity of ways of life throughout Asia, the women living under Russian rule in Asia suffered a common lot: their status was much that of domestic animals. The 'talking animal,' the Kazak term for a woman, expressed a usual point of view.

Why the status of women had sunk so low has been the subject of many enquiries. It is clear that it has taken on its extreme form comparatively recently: during the last thousand years. And during the nineteenth century they were worse off than at any previous time. In some parts the rise of centralized control added to their miseries: that is, where a state of everlasting tribal warfare had been usual and had died out under Russian policing, and the men, whose whole-time occupation had been fighting, were left with all their time on their hands. In such a case the women, in doing all the domestic and field-work, are doing all that there is to do, whereas before they were only doing their share. Many traces of matriarchy, too, have been found which show that in prehistoric times the status of women was often more or less on an equality with that of men, that is, before organized Christianity and organized Muhammadanism came in to spread the idea of women's inferiority. One thing is clear: where the degradation of status has reached the extreme

level which the Union seizes on as the best recommendation for its innovations, that degradation has been caused by Muhammadan custom. In non-Muhammadan Siberia they had not to endure the isolation and the veil, even while equally badly off socially and economically otherwise. In proportion as the influence of the mullahs grew strong in this or that district Central Asian women suffered more and more, coming to its climax in Bokhara. There the veils were thickest and the penalties severest.

Muhammad has no responsibility in the matter. More successful than any other reformer in promoting the brotherhood of man, he put no obstacle in the way of ensuring the sisterhood of women; Utopian as that may sound. But, in practice, the Muhammadan law and custom which was superposed upon the Qurân prescribed differently; in favour of those who had money to spare. This went on and on until women were bought and sold and could be procured in no other way. To this day one of the chief hindrances to reform in Central Asia is that people cannot think of a marriage as valid if no ' bride-price' has been paid; all the more so since Soviet officials often fall into line with local opinion and buy their wives in private while haranguing against the 'bride-price' in public. Nor can the people conceive why anyone should be punished for doing something so reasonable. But if a price is paid, then the woman becomes property; and so it goes on. Isolation and veiling are later accretions, brought in to reinforce rights acquired by payments. Payments are naturally more easily met by older men than by younger; and the grievances of the women grow greater when, in addition to being sold, they are sold to elderly men. A final twist was given to these tyrannies in districts where water-shortage is acutest. There the right to water was only allowed to married men. A poor man might have to pass all his youth unmarried before he could save up enough to pay

a 'bride-price' and claim his own water-supply; and no woman had a claim to water in her own right. Altogether, these privileges and oppressions had been screwed up to such extremes that there was no better plank in the Union's platform than the freeing of the women. After the Revolution in Uzbekistan 3,000 women are said to have received water in their own right: State-credits were provided for women, including widows, who were willing to go into business as farmers.

Furthermore, it appears from the 1939 census-figures that, contrary to what is usually stated, there are more women than men under Soviet rule. Another factor that is ignored is this, that as all the work had been thrown on to the women in the districts in question, they had been trained in work while the men had been trained in idleness: consequently the women formed the more suitable class to adopt and encourage as workers. As leaders likewise they were more practical: witness one new-made official who was asked if she thought she could manage the documentary part of the work, considering that reading and writing were, to say the least, novel to her; she answered that papers are never so important as people; she would stick to the people and get through all right.

A third factor, too, may have existed which does not seem to have been taken into account by any of the writers on the subject. In Bokhara, where the veiling was thickest, there is a special liability to skin diseases affecting the face. It may well be that influential women, in days gone by, being afflicted in that way themselves, took to wearing thicker veils and set up, first a standard, then a fashion, for thicker veils: a fashion which persisted and grew intensified.

What Mänchen-Helfen ascertained in Tanna-Tuva in 1929 about the position of women there, where none of the sophistication by Muhammadan or Christian doctrine

had occurred to belittle them, is equally to the point. Apart from being debarred access to running water because of a certain superstition of 'uncleanness' on their part, they lay under no disability. A 'bride-price' was customarily paid; yet they were none the worse off for that. In fact, they enjoyed the freedom of a full marriage-settlement, as we understand and practise it: girls were treated as kindly as boys, which is saying much in Tanna-Tuva, and the wife was the free and respected mate of the man.

But what all the rest amounted to, in Central Asia, in revolutionary terms, was that Bokhara must be converted by force and all else would follow of its own accord. A tremendous battle. Insistence on the unveiling of women sounded much the same there as would compulsory nudism here. By 1936 a fourteen-year war was practically won. The chief date was March 8 (Women's Day), 1927, when piles of veils were publicly burnt. This was repeated on a larger scale the following March 8; it was claimed that 100,000 women repudiated the veil that day. But many believed it was for the one day only: others relapsed under pressure from friends and relatives: only about 5,000 remained firm. But there was no stopping the advance of the movement, even though the Union would not force the pace by making unveiling compulsory. Poor women would tear off the veils of the more conservative rich women in the street. Most of the progress was due to the flaming enthusiasm of Russian women-propagandists who managed to break through all the barrage that men and mullahs could put up. Some disguised themselves as musicians, that being the easiest way for strangers to procure a welcome into a home. The very fact of seclusion for women aided them. Special shops for women being the rule, there talk could go on unhindered. Every opportunity was taken to amuse; plays were staged, and mock-trials. The latter were particularly popular and

effective. Dirty garments and too-ancient utensils were put in the dock, and the prosecutor always won. Lectures were provided on practical economics: one man who shut up his wife to prevent her attending a meeting but went himself, found that the subject discussed was the best method of keeping poultry. He returned home and let out his wife to come too. Brigades of 'cultural soldiers' would descend on settlements and clean up everything, washing pots which, if ever washed before, had only been washed in urine on account of the shortage of water.

Later stages were easy. But the first stages were risky. The missionaries were more hated than the Ogpu. Dogs were set on them: poisoning and stabbing happened. When an earthquake occurred, the mullahs put it about that here was divine vengeance for rebellion: so too with famines and plagues of locusts. Mullahs' wives would persuade and dissuade, and a progressive section amongst the Muslims evolved a liberation-movement of their own which won over many of the best of the Uzbeks. This latter was regarded by the Soviet authorities as the most dangerous form of opposition. Their own officials were not always helpful, looking upon unveiled women as fair game; dragging them into houses and violating them. It was a difficult time, too, and still is, for women who wanted to be free of the veil and yet marry and have children: finding themselves left on one side as of doubtful character.

In many places there was little to alter as regards seclusion and the veil; amongst the nomads, for instance. And Tadjik women of the mountains were free of restrictions by which Tadjik women of the plains were bound. But all were bound enough for liberation-propaganda to constitute good business; and a holy war on either side. One factory-hand had her throat cut by her father on the factory doorstep. One visitor who was in Samarkand in 1929 remembers a

woman being murdered for attempting to use her freedom; six men were executed for being implicated in this murder (Edvige Mrozowska, *Sine ira* . . . Milan, 1933); Pilniak tells another tale of the same year in Tadjikistan; of how one husband missed his wife and found she had gone off to the nearest town and freedom. He went after her, but the authorities upheld her and he had to return without her. On the way back he stopped for the night at the house of a friend and told his troubles. The next morning the friend's wife was missing: she had listened to the tale and made up her mind to follow the other wife. The two men caught her up before she had reached the town and stabbed her to death. Another woman was cut to pieces by her relations for appearing on the stage. On the other hand, Gustav Krist found an Uzbek woman acting as chairman of a village Soviet as early as 1926. Another example of the contradictoriness of information that arises in a state of transition and confusion is the recollection of Kurt Lubinski (writing in *Discovery*, July 1937) that when he was setting out for Kazakstan he was told that the women there hide from strangers, whereas, when he got there, he found them all anxious to be photographed. One visitor will say that no veil is to be seen in such-and-such a place, while a photograph taken there later will show veils still in use.

In certain ways the struggle was an economic one. Whatever people's wishes might prompt them to do, poverty would compel parents to sell their daughters, if only to repay debts, perhaps contracted during illness, when no other means of payment was open to them. The decreeing of a legal age for marriage went for nothing: brides were registered as of that age however much below it they might be. As against all that, there was the stimulus of receiving cash for work instead of doing all the work there was to be done, and remaining empty-handed. When money was put into

their hands, it seemed a fairy-tale. Then, too, women of all ages stood to benefit, whereas among the males only the older ones lost by the new ideas. It is striking how often instances come up of women becoming keen followers of the movement at ages when one might expect them to feel too old to start life again; sunk in indifference and hopelessness. Partly that is due to the toughness inherent in the people: if they have the vitality and healthiness to survive the hardships of childhood in Asia, the women are good for a full day's work at 60. At the same age they are to be found equally keen on instruction. Even a woman of 70 says, applying for admission to a school, 'Please let me learn: my eyes are still young: I don't want to die blind' — as living without reading seemed to her to be.

At the other end of the scale was the Tadjik girl of 17 whom Pilniak saw sitting alone amidst men and boys in a school, heeding nothing but the teaching, with the eyes of a saint; having run away from home to the nearest village where teaching was to be had. He saw her again later: by then she had made her way to the capital for more.

In Siberia Ruth Gruber was told some stories by the women she met significant of the different world that the Union really has created there. One, 60 years old, told how she had lived the first forty years of her life in the wilds, continually on the move and wholly occupied with domestic drudgery, knowing nothing of the world beyond. Fifteen years since she had heard of education being brought to the North, and wanted to go to school. Her husband beat her, saying that an old woman had no need of such things. She ran away, and for the first time spoke through a telephone, listened to a piano, flew in an aeroplane. She came back home flying, and started teaching others: in consequence, everyone in her community had learnt to read and to write. An older woman still, who had been sold to her husband at

the age of 11, became a widow at 25, with children to fend for, reindeer to look after, hunting to see to, always tired; now she looks forward to her children never suffering as she had suffered.

Then there was the young girl at Igarka, just able to marry and choose for herself: wanting four children, all to be brought up in Igarka, because Igarka was in need of more people, and because she wanted children, since she believed there was a better world a-building and that the children would reap the fruits of it and of her own and her husband's efforts. As for outlets for women, there was no need of stories to tell her of those; she herself visited a farm near, in charge of a woman and flourishing; kohl-rabi being grown as a preventive of scurvy, saving importing of lemons and being the more efficient preventive. Then, too, at every aerodrome she alighted at, hydrogen balloons were in use for ascertaining upper-air meteorological data automatically, abolishing the long and hazardous ascents by aviators which Ruth Gruber found to be still the method in use in North America; and at most of the stations the operator of the balloons was a woman. Not that all the women were enthusiastic. One grumbled that bread was all very well, more was wanted than bread; one couldn't live on beautiful talk. And depressed women-workers were to be found in dim, damp cellars in Igarka. But most were on the hopeful side, with something achieved to justify hope: more brightness, more protection, more efficiency. That is indeed, so it struck her, the note of the Soviet Arctic as contrasted with Arctic North America, where men who go north leave their women behind them, while in Siberia the women go too, pioneering just as women used to go pioneering in North America in undemoralized days. But those who go to the Arctic must qualify themselves for work; as heads of communities, as captains of ships, as scientists: fit for something.

To learn about prospects for women in Siberia there was no need to go farther than Leningrad. There is to be found the Institute of the North, training-centre for students from twenty-six tribes. First-hand information is to be found in F. W. Halle's book, since she made a stay there and made friends amongst the women-students in it. She also went on to the 'Kutv' at Moscow, another institute which gathers in more students — those from the southern provinces, differing widely from each other, representing communities which used to spend their time in incessant feuds, but whose student-delegates spend time together now, in fellowship of study in order to take back the benefits of what they learn to all who will listen, friends or former enemies.

A Kalmuk told her of her own former life on the steppes; of how her mother had slept all the nights away on the bare floor, not taking her clothes off for months on end, not daring to call her husband, or his relatives, nor even the dogs, by their names; and having to cover her face for two years after marriage. Another spoke of having been married at 12 to a man she had never seen, married off so by her mother to save her from the mother's own fate of being kidnapped: it had been among her duties to wash the feet of all the menfolk of her husband's family and live on leavings; and not permitted to sit down in the presence of the family. All agreed that if they had remained in their countries under the old conditions, they would have been forced, at the best, into premature sexual life and premature and excessive child-bearing. One of the commonest remarks passed is that now they can sing cheerful songs instead of the old ever-melancholy ones, just as the older women feel no longer content with the idea of dying now that they are human beings: they wish to go on living and to see the new generation make the most of the new life.

Then there is the freedom to divorce and to procure

abortions: freely used and abused in the earlier revolutionary days but now finding its level as a matter of supply and demand, so far as divorces are concerned. Abortions can no longer be performed without reason shown. It is said that women and children are so much better cared for now and opportunities for earning a living so greatly increased that abortions are a sin. The idea has been passed into law, in spite of opposition from multitudes who maintain that it is a hardship for married persons to have children when they have only half a room to live in.

The main body of the law on women's rights was enacted in 1928, forbidding marriage by purchase or by compulsion; forbidding also polygamy, child-marriage, taxation for religious purposes, and religious courts of law: all of these are interconnected. Such laws take effect, or remain dead-letters, naturally, just in so far as they harmonize with public opinion and can be fitted in to individual cases. They involve the upsetting of the whole basis of ideas and customs and ways of living over half a continent: all are so deeply-rooted that their secondary reasons and associations are enough to keep them in being even apart from many of their primary reasonings remaining so closely in touch with other needs and habits that change could only come gradually, if at all. But these old customs are not so old as they are believed to be. Tradition everywhere rarely goes back intact before the days of grandmamma. In Central Asia there are sturdy traditions of women warriors in the background, militating against nineteenth-century Central Asia from behind. And the repressive traditions of the latter have against them, not merely the propaganda and support of a ruling class, but likewise the tendencies and practical benefits of the present day which would be making themselves felt, and perhaps would win the day, in any case. 'Communism' is not the wave, but the crest of the wave. Many other ancient

Asian ways are on the wane. And least defensible of them all is four-law rule under which so many of the women used to suffer; the husband, the mother-in-law, the whip, and Islamic prescripts. This last is the weakest of the four: its writ does not run in many places: and, in any case, Central Asian Muhammadanism is so little Muhammadan as to be exposed to attack and could receive little support from the best class of Muslims.

It needs to be noted that the questions at issue are not so solely feminist as is usually represented. The mother-in-law is a major part of the tyranny, and is herself a free person in respect of one of the most valued rights of human beings, the right to tyrannize over others. Essentially, the question is an economic one, and so far the mothers-in-law have as vital an interest in maintaining the iniquitous old customs as anyone, while the none-too-rich young man stand to gain all that the mother-in-law stands to lose. Once a wife is bought she belongs to the family. If the husband dies, the family has the same claim on her services as her husband had, and decides whether she is to marry again, and, if so, to whom. However much wives may vary in price, they are cheap labour. The championship of the women's cause by the Union is in part another phase of that feature of Union finance which has already been referred to, namely, the making of presents to the 'republics' at the expense of individuals and propertied classes: likewise the enlisting of the economic aid of vast proletariats which are helpless by themselves if some central authority does not alter the balance in their favour. This is all the more marked inasmuch as 70 to 80 per cent. of the workers in textiles, a speciality of the Union, are women.

The World War prepared the way for all this, and the pre-war trend of thought; emancipation from a three-fold disability, sexual, social, national. The Union is applying

it on behalf of more than one hundred peoples. If the Union did not, some other authority would. But the authority which does apply it can take credit, or at any rate, will take credit, for it: even though this amounts to no more than the removal of artificial barriers put in place by vested interests of the past which are now on the downgrade.

So far as any test can be applied to more desire for freedom on the part of women, is it not to be found in the extent to which they use opportunities for earning a living? In the scientific careers which modernized nations specialize in, the following percentages may seem significant. They refer to employment of women between 1932 and 1938. In metallurgy the percentages of women employed rose from 21·7 to 26·3: in chemical industries from 28·7 to 37·2. These increases follow reputed 100 per cent. increases in the previous decade.

At present it may be called a series of hard battles and hard choices; and neither side can feel confident about the issue. A typical incident is that of F. W. Halle's visit to the Public Prosecutor of Ashqabad, a woman with two children. They went to the latter's home for twenty minutes. The eldest child, a three-year-old, came running out crying because he was left alone all day and aware that his mother was not going to stay long. The baby was being taken care of by a young brother-in-law. The mother was almost in tears too, divided between her good wishes for the community and for the boy: the day hot and dusty, her strength strained to the utmost, and, a few miles away, health and rest awaiting them all up on the hills, if only the demands of the present, and of arrears overdue from the past, did not prevent the mother attending to health and rest and her own children first of all.

CHAPTER V

TO-MORROW

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE PRESENT CHAPTER AND THE previous one is that the latter is occupied with data and the present chapter with tendencies. The distinction is a fine-drawn one. The two chapters overlap in respect of material. What has been happening has resulted in facts, and gives rise also to tendencies. The tendencies may result in more facts of similar kind; but, where the facts already resulting have been unsatisfactory, the tendencies may go off at any different angle. Many facts, satisfactory or not, will assuredly continue recurring; but re-consideration and revision are distinguishing factors in the present situation of the Union, of the Party, and of the subjects, to an extent which renders changes as much part of the picture as continuity.

In fact, for anyone who wants to get at the truth of things, the changeableness and changefulness of affairs and points of view within the Union are the features which he must first of all and always be prepared to recognize: both in every year of the last twenty years and at any date in the future. Once upon a time the ten was the highest card in the pack, and King, Queen and Knave the lowest; now the picture-cards have re-taken their old values, and in the old order. In the same way Littlepage, when he first went over, found no interference with tribal life going on. On the contrary, in Cossack villages, on feast-days, Cossacks would dress up in Tsarist uniforms, drinking the health of the Tsar and cursing the existing government. Life went on most happily. On his return to the same village only a few months later, all was changed: everybody was miserable and puzzled; the more

so since the price of eggs, for instance, had gone up one-hundred-fold. Plenty of evidence arises to suggest that since 1935 reaction has been in progress again and in favour of more moderation: set back indeed by the troubles of 1937, and now taken up once more. Juvenile crime has been repressed. Money-earnings have been reverted to as the principal stimulus for the worker. School discipline is stricter: more respect required for the authorities and for parents. New text-books have been ordered for history and geography, recognizing it as an error to suppose that the past is dead, admitting the importance of the Church as a civilizing influence (as having introduced a written language, etc.), and other benefits accruing from previous centuries and foreign countries. Much of the propaganda and abstract theorizing has likewise been omitted from them too.

Such matters are common to all the Soviets. The chief change is one that specially concerns Asia.

THE ALPHABET. This change is the adoption of the Russian alphabet for Asia in place of the former Latinized alphabet specially invented for Asiatic use. This Latinized alphabet has been one of the main items in Soviet propaganda and activity throughout their existence. In every book, friendly, hostile, descriptive, in whatever language, the introduction of reading and writing amongst analphabetic Asiatics by means of Latin letters perforce takes a prominent place as one of the outstanding characteristic aims and achievements. This method has been thrown overboard, though it would be hard to find any indication of this in print. The scrapping of this method implies much more than is at first sight apparent.

The introduction of reading and writing was a breaking-down of class-privilege, a privilege which had been maintained with the help of the difficulty of the script, whether Arabic or any other. Still more, it was a cardinal principle

with the Bolsheviks that reading and writing are the foundation of all progress. Spelling spelt freedom. But there existed scores of languages among their dependants which possessed no written form. They set to work to transliterate these, and it was a Latin-letter form they decided to give them. This may have been associated with the original idea that no sooner was the Bolshevik gospel proclaimed than all would hasten to accept it, and that therefore the most universal form of lettering was a necessity for international purposes. At any rate it was considered easier: ease for learning was an essential for those who were learning to read for the first time, whatever their age; and for the first time that any of their ancestors or relations had learnt to read. Millions of text-books have been issued, scores of translations, too, both from foreign authors and from Russian authors; likewise in millions of copies. All are now to be scrapped. Those who were analphabetic return to semi-analphabeticism and have to start again, almost at the beginning. All those native teachers who have learnt no other than the new script are no longer teachers: they must become learners once more before they can begin again as teachers. The old people who rejoiced in newspapers which had been denied them until they were old will now be deprived of them until, or if, they can relearn to read. The amount of discouragement and effort involved in this new departure can hardly be over-estimated.

At the same time, the abandoned system was due to breakdown some time or other. An acquaintance with the Russian alphabet is a necessity for those who are ruled from Moscow, unless Moscow itself was to abandon its own alphabet. So many of the letters were liable to be confusing if both alphabets remained in use: similar shapes bore differing sounds, similar sounds had two forms. It meant memorizing sixty characters, too much to expect from those to whom memor-

izing half that number was uphill work. Then there was the extra task for Russians themselves, and many of those none too good at such work.

Abandoning a common 'alphabet-front' with other people also renders foreign propaganda on Soviet territory more difficult. But it implies, too, the abandonment of world-conquest: rather a fear of the outer world conquering in its turn, and that to an extent which impels them to close their boundaries to letters as well as to persons.

The readiness for drastic and sudden reversal is in itself as significant as characteristic. If that goes, what else shall not go, and how soon? It is clear that they have been experiencing the inconveniences of teaching reading and writing, and their subjects the inconveniences of learning them. Is it a part of a change-over, an abandoning of too great a reliance on Westernization and a striking-out on new lines more their very own? The confusion of thought and activities is so great and inextricable that no clear line can be expected to become manifest as yet. But we can clarify what can be clarified if we attend to what constitutes common factors between Moscow and the West, and, starting from there, attempt to discern where lines of thought and growth are likely to run parallel and where likely to diverge.

A major common factor in modern tendencies, east, west, north, and south, is what is felt and accepted about the relations between

TOWN AND COUNTRY

It will clarify matters still further if, relinquishing the names 'Europe' and 'Asia,' we re-consider whether that division into two 'continents' is not in itself misleading. We can see for ourselves that the whole of the civilizations that exist, or can be traced as having existed, anywhere in the

world, originated in that continuous land-region which is arbitrarily divided up by geographers into two 'continents.' The east and west of this great stretch of land have been continually acting and reacting on each other. So far as origins go, we are being driven to look for them more and more in those lands between the Black Sea and the Caspian which are sometimes regarded as Asian, sometimes as European. We shall see things in a truer and less confusing light if we think of 'Europe' as a bunch of peninsulas radiating from 'Asia,' the beginning of whose roots and stems can no more be defined than those of any other roots and stems. It will become easier to follow and to estimate what is now happening in Soviet Asia if we see these happenings as but one more phase in interactions within a single region. Besides having the advantage of being true, it also has the advantage of dispelling controversial fog. Instead of thinking of the Union as borrowing from Europe and repudiating its debt, it seems safer to trace similar developments in both to kindred causes.

Recent developments in both regions are determined by the increased intervention of applied science and misapplied science in human affairs. Its tool is the town. The country is reckoned backward. The townsman is impatient, as compared with the countryman: and towns, once created, create even more homes for germs than for people. Germs flourish on people; not people on germs. We therefore live in a less patient, and in some ways less healthy, world than heretofore. And there are more of us, year by year, than in each previous year, owing to the multiplicity of new methods for preserving unfit as well as fit, and for utilizing misfits. Misfits and unfit, formerly not wanted, have souls to be 'saved' and votes to be caught; and potentialities as tax-payers, factory-hands and soldiers. And not only do we preserve the misfits: we create them by confounding instruction with

education, multiplying swarms of those who have received too much instruction to continue in their traditional mode of life and not enough education to fit them for any other. All of these varieties drift into the towns, and, at present, even more in Soviet Asia than elsewhere; since opportunities await them now that did not exist there till recently.

The townsman is more articulate, too. What is proved to his satisfaction may only be proved on paper, but disproof is difficult for the less articulate countryman, and what the countryman does not disprove is passed by those in power, townsmen themselves, who think of civilization as a process whereby the town thinks for the country. Such axioms have run away with the West and run riot in Soviet Asia. There the townsman's point of view has found three especial outlets, substitution of political for theological dogma, discouragement of nomadism and extinction of 'backwardness.' Just at present there seems to be a tendency developing to consider whether, after all, the best method of promoting human activities is not to leave people to develop on their own lines. Whether this is a tendency, or only a pause, is not clear.

NOMADISM. It was assumed that there was something fundamentally wrong about wandering: something fundamentally right about settling down. From the point of view of a centralized government that is so: it is easier to control, to mould, and, above all, to tax, people who remain in one spot and who possess immovable property. A blind eye was turned to the fact that most nomads are just as much settled people as most others, if not in the sense that they can be laid hands on when wanted. There is nothing irresponsible about nomadism. They move just in the same way as some English people go to the Riviera for the winter in between wars: they are the better for it. The nomads make a regular round of specified localities, except when interfered with and

diverted. Each spot serves them for maintenance for a known period at a given season: they move accordingly. The suppression of nomadism has indeed made for a broader life for some of them, enabling individuals who felt a vocation for a sedentary life to gratify it. While some manage, in spite of all inducements — propaganda, force, bribery — to wander as did their forefathers, some individuals amongst their brothers and sisters will be sitting for examinations as engineers, etc. Some will become tractor-worshippers while others keep to the old creed of movement: as one put it, 'Stars, animals, fishes, move: only the earth and the dead lie still.' There is more behind it than that, too. The nomad upholds what others feel, namely, that the unit of human life is the family, not the individual. Their enemy the State, like every other bureaucracy, thinks of humanity as consisting of individuals and the mass; of the taxable unit, on the one hand, and of the organizable, the collective unit on the other hand. The nomad is coming back to his own. Permissions have been granted of late to groups to revert to nomadism. If left to themselves they can increase livestock at a greater rate than the collectivized farmers can.

'BACKWARDNESS.' Soviet Asia is more human than Socialist; more Socialist than Communist; more Islamic than Socialist; more nomadic than Islamic; more manifold and intermingled than definable. Consequently there is ample occasion for putting down Asiatics as 'backward,' even when conscious that there is something wrong with the argument.

As the term is generally used, to be backward means being backward economically; as if there were nothing in life but economics. And amongst persons who think like that, it is taken for granted that everyone can read and write. Under those conditions all analphabetics are backward. Similarly with hygiene. In all three the townsman's point of view predominates — what holds good when people's ideas

are mass-produced and printing-presses are seen amongst them. But the poetry, the music, the carpets, of Soviet Asia give the lie to all this.

There is no need of study or travel to query these ideas. Photographs of hundreds of Soviet Asiatics are on view in books. All testify the same. Intelligent faces, filled with breadth and depth of character, usually genial, humorous, are the rule: the almost invariable rule, unless the photographs have been taken by someone unfit to deal with strangers. Such faces compare favourably with the faces to be seen on the platforms of a London terminus. Those, too, who are best acquainted with these people bear witness to patience, courtesy, critical sense, and hospitality being habitual amongst them to an extent not habitual amongst their opposites. Do personality and behaviour count for nothing when reckoning up what constitutes backwardness? But that is only a beginning. The nomads live mostly in 'yurts,' huts which can be taken to pieces and put up again anywhere: proof against earthquakes, temperatures, hurricanes. An amount of technique and skill goes to the making of 'yurts' which is the equal of that used in town architecture, and the results far more reliable and adaptable.

IN LITERATURE. East and West likewise agree in assuming that reading is at once a sign and a cause of an added mental capacity, a passport into a higher world which is the birthright of all human beings and from which analphabetics are shut out. It is true of a few, and, with infinite gradations, of many: but is it so for most? Is our experience of five hundred years of printing wholly a happy one? Does our experience of compulsory instruction show that the capacity to read leads to anything more than a new technical acquirement which can as easily be turned to bad use as good? And how many readers in any country are able to read more than one thousand words in a connected argument; or anything,

even in their own language, that is not crude? Certainly, when all are taught to read, it becomes a matter of self-respect and convenience in a boy to learn to read; but that much may be said about wearing trousers. With them, as with us, compulsory education is inseparable from propaganda. From the point of view of civilization, either education ought not to be compulsory, or it ought to be of better quality.

As a tendency within the Union, however, such hesitations never get a hearing any more than with us. Yet their practice differs, so far as reading for aliens goes, from both English and from Dutch methods. Whereas we encourage natives to learn English, the Dutch consider that it is too great an effort for Asiatics to learn a European language; an effort which, if attempted, and still more if successful, produces bad results. In the Union, on the other hand, everyone is welcome to absorb all the learning he can. Moreover, an immense amount of enthusiasm has been expended in stimulating local literatures: sometimes speaking as if they were revealing it, sometimes as if creating it; and always believing that in introducing a printing-press into a district they are inventing a means of self-expression for people hitherto little more than dumb animals. Whatever they can induce the natives to reveal of their traditional literatures and whatever the latter can produce that is up to date, is hurried on to the printing-press or the stage. It must be recognized that there is a high percentage of liberal enthusiasm at work in all this, above and beyond seeking methods of injecting propaganda. Neither are they afraid to provide the aliens with translations of authors of the highest capacity, regardless of the effect the latter might have in making them think dangerously. It is astonishing to see them making a speciality of Shakespeare, who can never speak of the proletariat without contempt and who has a way of being so uncomfortably up to date.

True, no one seems to have made an examination of these translations that are printed by the million — how far they are unadulterated versions or how far not. That is another gap in our knowledge, the ignorance of what local libraries contain.

Where, furthermore, they consider they have done a service to the natives of Asia is in transferring their oral literature to print, even though, under the new system, most of the work done by these devotees of oral literature will be wasted if not set up afresh in Russian type. But all agree in thinking of literature as essentially printed matter — surely as great an error as to think of printed matter as literature? And it remains to be seen whether this theory is going to have its own way, as in Europe, or whether Asia is not going to assert itself and maintain a better balance as between printed and oral literature. The latter, once put into print, is killed out as oral literature. It has qualities of its own that vanish in print just as surely as qualities vanish in translation. Print is a recent invention which only a small minority have settled down to, or perhaps ever will be able to settle down to. Assimilating it incurs a muscular strain, both of the eye and of the body, whereas the reciting and listening which form the staple of the oral form can take their course in states of full physical rest. Reading print stagnates the circulation: talking and listening stimulate it. Health is signified by a cool head and warm feet: reading produces a hot head and cold feet. The use of print accentuates the lopsidedness of modern civilization, the trend towards an eye-and-brain civilization which, whatever its strong points, is incomplete and needs to be supplemented by, or alternated with, mediums not yet at our disposal. As it is, in so far as anyone uses his eyes for reading he tends to lose the use of them for any other purpose, while those who can only half-read, which is as far as most ever get, are driven back into a

radio-cinema desert; a disinherited and starving multitude, trying to feed without food. Most of the world's literature has been composed by 'backward' people and much of the best of it by men who could neither read nor write. And, by every probability of which we are aware, all of the founders of all the world-religions belonged to that same class.

Altogether there is more in these 'backward' people than can be crushed, re-moulded, and evangelized by hot-gospellers who, however excellent their intentions and just in their perceptions — within their own narrow limits — represent only one tendency out of two. Here too, it remains to be seen whether the town-civilization which they insist on is going to prevail or to provoke reaction. It is certain that at present they are trying to destroy things whose value and strength and place in life they underestimate, and to substitute a literary class which will be as little in touch with people in general as ours is.

Whether the political and industrial movements of the present are going to produce a literature of their own is yet another question whose answer has to be left in suspense for the time being. But as to the past and the value of what it did produce, that may be summed up in the experience of Jochelson amongst the tribes who are accounted the most backward of all, the hunting-tribes of the Far North-East. Not unmindful, he says, that authorities deny to these people the possession of poetry or a sense of poetry, he has found that they possess poetry of a peculiar beauty and praises the quality of their epics and the dramatizations of them by the 'shamans.' All the foregoing is linked up with all forms of self-expressiveness, in arts and crafts; with music, song and dance, and carpets in particular.

The others who have had the opportunity to acquaint themselves with what goes on, with what is likely to persist and what not, are at variance among themselves. Slonim,

with all his kindly appreciation of the ancient arts and crafts, speaks of those who work at them as steeped in 'sommeil séculaire.' Lobanov-Rostovsky says, in connection with a list he gives of races inhabiting Union dominions, 'Of the Asiatic races mentioned in this table the Armenians, the Georgians, and the Jews alone have any justifiable claim to culture,' while the best equipped observer (F. W. Halle) finds by personal intercourse that to the Eastern women as well as the men the language of poetry is an inner necessity, indeed, the very atmosphere they breathe; and that among the Kazaks much of the poetry that circulates anonymously is the work of the women and girls. What she says is confirmed by her photographs, and those by others: in fact, they suggest doubts as to whether the Central Asian women can have lived so doomed and downtrodden a life as is asserted. The mere fact of unveiling could hardly have enabled them to shake off the by-products of centuries of real backwardness and spring straightaway into the vividness and sensitiveness that these photographs display. Amongst the Northerners, too, the same observer noted that the people were born and finished painters, sculptors, modellers, and, amidst the Southerners, born musicians, singers, dancers, actors. Each group, moreover, possess specialities; the Turkmans, for instance, who have no dances, sit rapt, listening to their own strange music which sounds as if produced 'not with ordinary strings but with their own nerves and hearts' blood.'

MUSIC. Significant is a report issued on the recent exhibition of musical instruments of the Union at Moscow; a report which is not in print. 'Field-workers' from the Krupskaya Home of Folk Art travelled throughout the dominions collecting specimens. The extraordinary wealth of the musical heritage thus revealed was more marked in Central Asia than elsewhere. The Uzbeks were found to possess

forty kinds of instruments; including prototypes of all the instruments of a modern orchestra. And then, as to materials, there were those instruments fashioned by people dependent on the horse and the camel; bow and strings of horsehair, sounding-board of camel-hide. And so on. Allowing for the defects inherent in exhibition-reports, this report is above the average both in material and in manner of statement, stressing the wealth and capacities for expressiveness.

But there is another side to all this. The beauty and expressiveness of these players and these instruments are dependent on village-life and the open air. Likewise on the voice being accepted as the principal musical instrument. In fact, the use, the existence, of this music is bound up with acceptance of the axioms which obtained in Europe up to about two centuries ago, but which have been distorted or destroyed by the industrialization of music in our world; the subordination of the voice to instruments too powerful for the voice to compete with, the competition among factories to evolve more and more intensified instruments which demand the whole time, the whole lifetime, of the performer, who nevertheless remains ignorant of how his instrument is made and consequently how best it can be used, and also ignorant of any instrument but his own. All this entails the growth of specialization in listening as well as in playing.

The exhibition-report foreshadows a similar development in Central Asia also. Russian instrument-makers are described as engaged on fashioning 'improved' forms of local instruments: others are being 're-constructed' and adapted for orchestral use. The forty Uzbek types have each their separate employment, or in combinations of three: they are being modified for combined use of all forty in a symphony orchestra. The Kazak 'dombra' is distinguished by the exquisite carving on its bone handles: will that carving survive when the dombra is manufactured for orchestral use?

All this modernization is so much destruction; as in the progressive vulgarization of the organ with us, until what has been lost ceases even to be known to have been lost. Something fresh will come of it: something clever; and, it may well be, worth having; but the individual loses more than the audience gains. Unless the individual insists on keeping it.

CARPETS. So also with the carpet industry, with which nothing Western has been able to compete in beauty or in quality. This, too, is especially associated with Central Asia; and with women's work. The women not only hold their own against all outside competition, but against their own men-folk. The women carpet-workers, cut off from other outlets hitherto, work into their carpets their joys and sorrows, the passing of their youth and their experience of life, their dreams, fears, and hopes, day by day, over the months and years that go to the making of a single carpet. Working within the framework of a traditional pattern, they inset the carpets according to the mood of the day and the temperament of the worker, with infinite variations of their own: it is said that their work cannot be appreciated without knowledge of the part that water-motives play in the designing, that water whose presence or absence makes or mars the tribal life. Some damage is said to have been done by the introduction of factory dyes; but also that the Soviet organizers have stepped in and stopped that, encouraging a reversion to that traditional technique by means of which alone can the results of the past be obtained.

Finally, as regards the opposition between town and country, and the future of all these arts and crafts and the artistic life that is bound up with them, it is to be noted that this opposition is certainly not irreconcilable. They are all home industries. In France, of recent years, there has been a reversion to home-industries; aided, in fact made possible,

by cheap electric power. Now, the development of electric power is one of the leading lines of effort in the Union.

Two recent events significant for the future have been the re-constitution of the Academy of Sciences in 1938 and the Agricultural Exhibition of 1939.

SCIENCE AND AGRICULTURE. The Academy had previously been doing excellent work, issuing reports as different as possible from all that is associated with Soviet publications. The reconstitution is on the biggest scale, and even if the whole programme may be, to say the least, over-confident, we may still be sure of contributions which will benefit the whole world and succeeding generations. The head of it is Otto Schmidt, the organizer of the North Pole expedition. Amongst the schemes already given effect to is stratospheric research into the mysteries of cosmic radiations and their endless possibilities. The Agricultural Exhibition drew together those engaged in myriads of attempts to improve the quantity, quality and variety of yields from the soil; both for medicine as for industry. It also provided an object-lesson in the way of showing Russians and all others their common interests and interdependency. It stands too for a series of real achievements in widening out the resources of human beings for more and better supplies of materials, such as new plants from which to obtain rubber, textiles, etc., for prevention of disease and for making life easier under hard conditions, which cannot fail to throw out some benefits in the near or far future.

THE ARMY. Another continual move forward is in extension of colonization. It is still in its infancy and none too healthy an infant. But what is infancy in fact is maturity in promise. It awaits increase of population. So far the chief means to the end is the army. By moving hundreds of thou-

sands of young men from place to place, especially into the Far East, the eyes of the younger generation are opened to opportunities for settlement once army life is over. The army gains many recruits just for the sake of travel. It is also a gain in hard times to be wearing a uniform and licensed to carry weapons: such privileges do, in effect, reduce the cost of living. From a military point of view such side-issues may hinder military efficiency, as likewise do the obligations (at times) to contribute manual labour in the fields and to listen to hours of propaganda lectures. The presence of thousands of women in the ranks as soldiers may seem, too, to be carrying co-education too far: but there is nothing foreign to Russian or Asian tradition in that. Certainly, the isolation of the younger generation from the older serves its purpose of rendering the former more susceptible to change of ideas, both by instruction and by contagion.

Side-issues, however, are being more and more ruled out, and military efficiency put first. Yet there exists one permanent handicap which is generally ignored. This handicap lies in the fact that the vast majority of Soviet subjects are brought up on the plains. Now any advance southwards has to be made over mountains, across tremendous mountain-ranges in which men of the plains would find themselves, so to speak, all at sea.

WATER. Everything in Soviet Asia comes back to the water-question. There the main problems are on so gigantic a scale that solutions cannot be expected to move otherwise than slowly. But they do move. One such is the prospecting for underground lakes where nothing is visible but desert. In several places, it is claimed, fountains have been made to rise under their own pressure from sources buried under hundreds of feet of sand. Then there is the allied problem of inducing underground rivers, or diverted rivers, to run once again in the beds in which they used to run. Such

reorganized channels would have to be in use for years before the salts were washed out sufficiently for the water to become drinkable. But undrinkable water is better than none, even indoors, and still more for irrigation: and what is undrinkable for human beings may be drinkable by livestock. Camels and some breeds of sheep can make use of it; likewise certain wild animals which would come in handy for food. Poplars can be planted in such regions and grow well enough to provide fuel and some building material, and help to give a district a start.

MACHINERY. Another turnover that may be expected in the near future, and continue to develop, is the more economical use of machinery. Much has been made of the recklessness with which machines have been ruined and left to rust. The change-over from handling animals to 100 per cent. mechanization is not a simple process or a speedy one. The past fifteen years have been years when there was a predisposition among the Russians themselves to look on machines as divinities and fool-proof: much more so in Asia. The spread of the idea that machinery needs as much care as a child is not going to make any showing in statistics, but much in terms of human welfare and potentialities.

CINEMA AND RADIO. No more complete puzzle in Asia than the film-industry. No observer makes any study of what is done, what left undone: what is popular, what not. A case may be made out for terrific progress; an equally sound case for the strangest paralysis. We have, for instance, a pamphlet from Eisenstein himself eulogizing its super-excellence and super-progress: likewise the knowledge that Eisenstein has only been allowed to complete one film in the past eleven years out of the thirteen he has planned. It is said that excellent work has been done with nature-films, especially bird-life. Radio is conditioned by the lack of privacy that prevails wherever Russian conditions prevail,

which prevent listeners from listening-in to anything disapproved of by the authorities. But this does not prevent the Japanese from broadcasting in Turki to Central Asia.

Throughout these processes, changes, experiments, somersaults, that have received some scanty attention in the preceding pages, one broad line is clear, a line of learning. Learning in Moscow: learning in Asia; learning from success, learning from failure. Above all, learning from each other.

A special aspect is learning from colonization. Of course, it is very wrong, technically, to speak of 'autonomous republics' as having anything in common with the 'colonies' of the wicked old world that was; but from the point of view of the twenty-first century, which is, after all, what we are ultimately concerned with, the difference may not be so apparent.

COLONIES AND EDUCATION. In days gone by it was always assumed that acquiring fresh territory spelt riches for the new owners. The idea still flourishes. How little there is in it! Even supposing a balance-sheet could be drawn up for any foreign possession showing a credit balance in favour of the proprietor, all that balance needs to be transferred to a reserve-account which will be swept away, with more also, by the necessity of defending it sometime or other. But even when that idea has been discarded, there remain ideas of power, of prestige, of convenience and security, which induce peoples to reach out for more and hold on tight to what their forefathers took, however shortsighted those forefathers may have been and whatever the drain on their posterity. Yet one asset there is: namely, the extent to which control of foreign lands and foreign peoples educates those who do the controlling. All other assets may prove Dead Sea fruit, or worse: learning something fresh is worth while. No better place to study this than the Colonial Museum at Amsterdam.

The study is simplified there by reason of the Dutch possessions in the East Indies all belonging to a single species of civilization, and that a fine art one. If an artistic and enterprising people like the Dutch have so much to learn and have broadened out their own gifts and experience by learning it and by administering the lands which teach it, how much more is that the case with the more varied areas into which the English and the Muscovites have spread themselves; overseas in the one case, overland in the other.

LONDON AND MOSCOW

The relations between these two centres and between all that both stand for may claim some few paragraphs to themselves. External affairs cannot fail to react on the internal affairs of Soviet Asia; and, since such reaction can only be alluded to here in some simplified form, the simplification may conveniently take the form of relations between London and Moscow.

Normally, such paragraphs would be political: prophetic or doctrinaire. But I have no qualifications for such a task: nor any respect for those who think they have. It seems to me that there has been no such advance in politics, the last three thousand years, as has taken place in surgery, sanitation, and thousands of other mixed blessings. It is, therefore, to common factors, common interests, that these paragraphs must limit themselves: amidst considerations of hindering influences.

Common factors go so far as to become rather curious. They are not specified here as mysterious parallels, but as details arising naturally out of simultaneous growth. The area which Moscow has had to draw upon, for instance, for its staff wherewith to control distant regions is comparable

with the area of the British Isles. The centuries wherein London and Moscow have come to be centres of control have been identical: and during the middle century of that period — the eighteenth — both centres were being misgoverned by German rulers. Both are primarily Asiatic Powers: both have their headquarters — at present — in Europe. Both have enough Muhammadan subjects for wisdom or unwisdom in dealings with Muslims to make the difference between standing or falling. Both contain a dangerous number of ill-nourished and disaffected people; even in and around their principal cities. Both are developing town-civilizations at the expense of their countrysides. Both spent the 'Middle Ages' being ruled by foreigners and subsequent ages in ruling foreigners. Both, in the opinion of all other centres, are possessed of more power than they are fit to use. Logocracies, both, in truth: led by the nose by adjectives: but both, in the opinion of their subjects, preferable to local despots — perhaps. Both, too, have a comparable capacity for acting in one way and talking in another. Whilst the Union is Socialist in name and Communist in control, the United Kingdom is a monarchy in name, an oligarchy in fact, and a democracy in journalism. No reference-book will confirm this last sentence: but every 'Honours List' will. And when their two sets of voters come to vote, is there not one more similarity-in-diversity to note? In the one the people fit to vote can't vote: in the other the people unfit to vote do vote. Is the net result diverse? And whereas Britannia thinks She rules the waves and the Soviets think They rule the ice, is it not rather that the waves rule Britannia and the ice the Soviets?

Here we are amidst these hindering influences above-mentioned. They do not end there. Majorities here, there, and everywhere, accept it as axiomatic that politics control human affairs and that politicians control politics. And

whether politicians acquire power by violence or by persuasion, in both cases they are dependent for attaining it and maintaining it on the assent of the majority. That majority consists to the extent of, say, 99 per cent., of persons who never leave their own district, who live out their lives under the continuous pressure of their daily needs, ignorant of any other means of expression than the dialect in use around them. Whatever leaven of journalism is injected into that dialect keeps them back rather than otherwise. The few who do leave their own districts are mostly unable or unwilling to take an intelligent interest in the necessities of life farther afield. Those who do take such an interest are regarded with suspicion at home. Sympathetic comprehension of the needs and desires of foreign peoples never happens. All belong to communities which are riddled with feuds and cross-purposes, even while they are exhorting themselves to federate (as united units) with larger communities which are themselves riddled with larger and bitterer dissensions. All those who want peace are daily doing, through ignorance, things that bring about war. What hope can there be for any to rise to the top under such conditions other than those who are out to make a career for themselves by exploiting home politics in State or Church without the training or the wish to know or to care about the details or the essentials of external affairs? Needs must when the Unintelligentsia drives.

Some few of a different type succeed even under such conditions, but cannot remain in office long enough to become trusted or to follow up a consistent policy: far less to co-operate with like-minded Foreign Ministers abroad. Misfortune or prosperity alike squeeze the masses into blind forces, ready to hand for some group, or some man, little inclined to treat knowledge or long views or reason or humanity as friends. There is nothing to be gained by shut-

ting one's eyes to such being the basis of international politics in every country, or endeavouring to define them in moral terms. It remains to reckon up what can be done as things are. Here we return to the common interests. Things have always been in this state: yet both Europe and Asia have thriven on it. During the last forty thousand years we biological curiosities have advanced from being able to count up to five right up to measuring the Universe; and corresponding advances have occurred all round. A vast body of skilled workers has come into existence, more vast and more skilled than has ever existed before, who wish to be left in peace to employ their skill and leave their posterity better off than its ancestors. Throughout those forty thousand years that skill has been rendering human life healthier, wider, richer in both spiritual and material resources; a steady progress accompanied by the blessings and potentialities that such an advance yields. In particular, minorities that formerly existed in helpless isolation, without even the consolation of the knowledge that kindred minorities existed, can now come into touch with each other; thanks to steam and print. Any increase of such a body of skilled workers improves the prospects for all such. The increase in Soviet Asia constitutes such an improvement. It is not much. It is not enough. But it is something. It is more of the kind of thing that has made Europeans and Asiatics one people in civilization, and the only originators and fosterers of all the civilization that has ever been. Let us turn to the special contributions that the Soviets are making.

SOME STRONG POINTS OF THE UNION

The Muscovites can reckon on a high percentage of that distrust and hatred which is the portion of all those in authority. But that percentage need not go higher. Hitherto

their rule has suffered as all brand-new rule must suffer, from the ruling class possessing no tradition, no respect, no self-respect, nor much self-confidence except of an unjustified kind. The majority of those whose services they have had to use have been under suspicion as time-servers, half-hearted, or doctrinaires, or secret opponents. Then, too, there is so much discussion and listening to discussion that is obligatory that it is a hard matter to get on with one's job; and the background of terrorization and mutual suspiciousness in face whereof initiative and striving wilt away — if ever these are to die down, how can that be until this generation has passed away? The leading men in the Revolution were exiles under the previous régime; it must be a lesson to them to recollect that, had they been murdered instead of exiled, there might have been no Revolution. Destroy, or hide, or be destroyed, is the law of the Universe that some may shut their eyes to in too-too-comfortable England, but not the wise men, women, and children of Soviet Asia; still less Comrade So-and-so.

Yet during these fifteen years something has been forthcoming to show value for leadership and reform, even to reduce fear — perhaps — so far as subjects are concerned. Something even to reassure the time-serving staff that they have not been serving time for nothing. At any rate, some degree of prestige accrues by the mere fact of continuance in power and of becoming less dogmatic. And whatever the 'native' may hate the Russian for, it is not rigidity. If he is not endowed with that patience under routine that is necessary for administration — which, after all, is only efficient in so far as it is not exciting — the Russian does forget his own regulations and their harshness so readily that his lack of persistence is a fair substitute for those ultra-human qualities which the best type of English administrator brings to bear, and the appearance of which his associates bring to bear.

RACIAL PREJUDICE. A stronger asset still with the Muscovites was, and is, their greater freedom from racial prejudice than any other rulers possess. It may arise from their freedom from sea-boundaries: people come and people go, and have come and gone, in such quantity and with so little restriction, in and out of all the territories that the Muscovites have lived in. People over whom they rule, once ruled over them. Intermarriage between the two has always been the custom. High degrees of skill, capacity, and taste, in many differing peoples are met with; sufficiently so to reconcile dependants and rulers as well as to educate the latter, and to enable the two to bargain with each other on even terms. When, as often happens, a Russian woman prefers a native to a Russian man, marriage takes place — and continues — unhindered by prejudice. Instead of providing a dominant alien class, a native class is formed which is attached to Russian leaders, one which would find life more dangerous if the link were broken. It does not even pay to be a Russian in Soviet Asia unless the Russian happens to be a member of the Party: there are no class-privileged verdicts to be obtained in the law-courts or outside them. Mixture of descent alone accounts for much; Russian Asia may be said to be about as Russian in personnel as a 'Russian' ballet. It would perhaps be going too far to say that the relations between races may become less antagonistic than elsewhere: sectional enmities usually get the upper hand of good relations between individuals and the hindrances in the way of establishing the latter are, as a rule, insuperable. On the other hand it could hardly be said that mutual antipathies, except in the case of special feuds, are stronger than those existing between Canadian, Hindu, Muslim, Australian, South African, West Indian, Scottish, English, Welsh, Irish, Cornish, Manx, etc., which, after all, take a rest when there is a common interest to be kept going somehow. And

this may be expected to be still more so as long as theories of self-government and independence remain in the air sufficiently for appearances to be kept up about those too, and the 'republics' are players in one game even if pawns in another.

ROME AND MOSCOW. Another point on which the Muscovites may congratulate themselves is their freedom from the influence of Ancient Rome, apart from that much of it which has tinged them through Byzantium: no great matter. In our part of the world, it may be suggested, the influence of classical Rome has been one of our worst handicaps, all the more so since it is ingrained in us from childhood to assume it to be a blessing; so much so that the question is never examined. The early Romans had no resources or constructive capacities of their own: their choice was to loot or die. They chose looting. In time they discovered better cement than others had. With that cement they could build more impressive buildings, if less artistic, than others could build. On that basis of loot-and-build the whole Roman reputation rests. That is the framework of Modern Europe. But once they had looted and built effectively enough in Western Europe no voice was heeded but the Roman voice; no version but the Roman version. All that was Roman was accepted as a standard: even the low-grade literature which is still ranked level with that of Greece, and upheld as a model, by pedagogues who live in countries which have first-class literatures of their own. And even that literature, it must be remembered, had in practically every single instance, to be written for the Romans by foreigners. The effect of that standard was that life became so brutal and so dull that even the thaumaturgy of the Christian Fathers seemed a welcome alternative: the aberrations of organized Christianity may be traced to reaction against the standardization of Roman standards. The chief contrast between a Romanized world

and a comparatively unspoilt one — is it not that the imagination has freer play? Wherever in Europe that Romanization is revolted against, in Tuscany, in Sicily, in Ireland, in Spain, or amongst artists and in every child-mind, it is the setting free of the imagination that is the hall-mark of the liberation: and wherever Romanization holds good, rigidity, brutality, over-organization gain ground. It is most marked in the reputation of Roman roads; an invention of second-rate nineteenth-century antiquaries in spite of the protests of the first-rate scholars. No engineer for centuries has constructed a road on Roman lines because he would know the method to be unsound. Roman numerals have long been discarded as incompetent. If Roman lettering has held its own in outline, that has only been so subject to such continuous remodelling by designers that no Roman would recognize it. Yet, even so, it has served to retain printing on a less artistic level than it can attain to with other alphabets.

The Russians have never lived within that nightmare circle, and if now they seem anxious to make up arrears and Romanize down to North-American levels, is it to be regarded otherwise than as a phase through which they would wish to pass — one section of them — to show they can compete with any on any lines? Certainly it must be taken in conjunction with their exceptional capacity for making everything exciting, which carries with it a tendency to go on to some other phase soon. Such transitions are the easier to people into whose life the steppe has entered as a tradition and a formative influence. The boundless expanses, the extremes of heat and cold, of famine and plenty, breed a recklessness, a readiness for everything. And the steppe in Russia is repeated, in essentials, in Asia.

Whether the Russians will ever work up to the best standards of Danish, Dutch, English, French administration of dependent peoples' affairs is unguessable. But all these

four took long to learn their administrative job. In England especially has the process been a slow one. And not only slow, but recent. An entirely different frame of mind, a chastened one, has only become apparent during the present century. Books like *An African Survey* and *The Legacy of India* would not have been tolerated by previous generations, whereas nowadays they are accepted as authoritative and persuasive. E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* would have stirred last-century readers to fury instead of coming as near to being a best-seller as a finely-written book can.

HOPE. With all this, the 'Communists' are in the running in Asia. Handicapped though they be by the newness of the new start, they enjoy the compensation of being able to blame the past for the past and to thrill the class that wants to be thrilled with a new dawn. Short as their shortages are, they always keep hope in stock. Plans may go wrong, figures may be falsified, famines may overwhelm them, the Party may be purged in vain: but there is always movement, movement forward, movement to somewhere where things are going to be better than here and now. Onlookers may say that it is only a new pair of wings wherewith to fly to that same old Earthly Paradise which no one has ever yet reached and no one ever will; and they may say truly; but they are not going to be believed. The boundless miseries and calamities of the present only intensify a belief when the belief has hope behind it. It is the belief that counts and the hope that inspires the belief — the hope and belief that, though those who now live may die with their sorrows and their privations full on them, and foreseeing more hardships awaiting their children, yet that these shall be fewer for their children than for them, and fewer still for their grandchildren.

In that sense Moscow is competing with London. It is also competing by believing there is something else in life for women besides man-hunting, by getting the women in to

work with them, by giving them responsible jobs; and succeeding with the idea. Both kinds of competition we are urgently in need of. As for hope, the British Empire supplies plenty; but never enough. Much has been provided in the past which has matured: more is maturing now: more still in prospect. But to make out that the average has been up to the level of Danish administration in Greenland is just shutting our eyes. And while we are supplying hope to some, with the other hand we are handing out despair to others. If a reason is looked for, there will not be far to look. Hansard supplies it. The quantity and quality of the attention which dependent peoples get from the House of Commons is a symptom of what they get from the voters. Another symptom is that the Minister for the Colonies is usually the most insignificant member of the Cabinet. An occasional galvanization is not enough. Least of all is it enough for competition with Moscow. In these dependencies of ours there are the resources, both in materials and in people, and there are the needs — their resources and our resources, our needs and their needs — the administration and fulfilment of which is going to make all the difference as to whether we sink or swim and deserve to swim or deserve to sink. But there is not the spirit here, as there is in Moscow, to make it seem worth while to a majority to work at it: practicable and necessary to believe in it, to be hopeful about it, and to impart belief and hope among dependent peoples.

THE FUTURE OF SOVIET ASIA

Conditions may be worse in Soviet Asia. They are. But they are improving rapidly, out of all proportion to what is happening elsewhere: rapidly enough to overhaul most of the lag in a generation or two. Different persons will set up different standards for assessing what is improvement and

what not; running through all the gamut of all grades and shades of sentimentality, utilitarianism, and vision. And we cannot expect to foresee much. If anyone in 1809 were setting out to assess the future of the French Revolution he would not have foreseen much about railways and all the changes they have entailed; nor anything about developments in inn-keeping and vintages and motor-cars, about survivals and revivals, or as to there being four times as many French people as ever there had been before: still less as to the increasing regard of English people for France; and even, in the more enlightened cases, for the French. Nor would he foresee Pasteur, nor Lyautey, nor Debussy, nor Vidal de la Blache, etc., etc., etc. He could foresee the ancient evils recurring; he could see that, with regard to every single aim with which the French Revolution had set out, the opposite had happened. But it is the best that is to happen that is the least-easily foreseeable.

Least of all with the Muscovites. Unpossessive and tempestuous, they are not afraid of much that terrifies us: such as misfortune, sorrow, loss, chaos. They live more on their consciousness and its treasures, deriving as much pleasure from the exercise of their emotions as do Englishmen from property. As in their literature, so in their life — they have much to give, the best of them, that we cannot give; and they like giving.

In conclusion, there is something on which all can agree and which none can deny, namely, that there is growing up day by day more and more material to be made or marred — human material. There are more people in the world to-day than ever before. Numbers increase: rates of increase increase. In Soviet territories the rate is nine thousand babies a day: few enough as compared with the nineteen thousand a day of India. But there they are, and in need of help: both sets, and other thousands. There are more children under

15 in Soviet territory than in Italy, France, Great Britain and Germany put together. Opportunities grow more and more frequent for better housing, more food, longer lives, wider lives, than ever before; for all the foundations for whatever spiritual superstructure anyone may want to create either for his own purposes, or others. Cruelty, wastage, senselessness, go on as usual. They are three of the four dominant factors in the forces to which we human beings are subject. But all three together are losing fighters compared with the fourth, the prolificness of the teeming world. That has always held its own. It is always there as the invincible ally of whatever little decency and sense may become available at any given moment, in any given place. The three first come to the surface day by day, palliated, reinforced, exploited, by theological and political catchwords and superstitions. Failure occurs in every direction daily in consequence; but met incessantly by the instincts of fatherhood and motherhood; and, so far, unconquerably, always providing fresh material for the hourly struggle in Soviet Asia, in England, all the world over, alike. Victims of the struggle, it is true, most of the material proves to be: but, on the whole, victors; oftentimes both at once, and with the chance of turning the scale in the future, increasingly. Fraternity may be always failing: Maternity is always succeeding.

Bibliographical Note. — In addition to the subjoined list of sources which are referred to in the text, something needs to be said as to sources in general. These have had to be limited to what could be unearthed in a single belligerent country during 1939–40: a limitation indeed, considering that for information in western Europe about the Soviets, Germany is the leading country. However, what remains available may suffice for general impressions, and for some detail. In any case, evidence would only be obtainable in fragmentary form; and that, by the time it gets into print in Europe, is usually two years old. Readers, therefore, who expect their information to be up to date are referred to the periodical Press; and, as the Spaniards say, much good may it do them. Formal political detail of recent date is at hand in the Bulletins of the Institute of International Affairs: the rest nowhere, not in a critical form. Amongst libraries, the most useful has been that of the Royal Geographical Society, owing to its custom of cataloguing material supplied in periodicals. The London Library, the Royal Central Asian Society, the Royal Asiatic Society, have also provided much: likewise the Society for Cultural Relations (i.e., between the U.S.S.R. and Great Britain), especially as regards unprinted matter and scientific research. For that profounder background which affects the movements here reviewed but which must be passed over as beyond the scope of this book, Fernand Grenard's *Grandeur et décadence de l'Asie* (Armand Colin, 1939) may be recommended: it is especially valuable for enabling English readers to see current events in proportion. It is a pleasure, too, to put on record my debt to Miss Tamara Djakelly for so much help, at the British Museum and elsewhere, and criticisms; and to my wife also. My acknowledgements are likewise due to the Royal Central Asian Society for the use of the section on Birobidjan, which appeared in its Journal.