

"The idea becomes power when it penetrates the masses."  
—Karl Marx.

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# RUSSIA TODAY

## The Official Report of the British Trade Union Delegation to Soviet Russia

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### PREFACE

The Delegation representing the British Trades Union Congress left London on November 7th, 1924, and travelled to Moscow. After a stay there it went on to Kharkov, the Don Basin, Rostov, the Caucasus, Baku, and Tiflis. Thence it returned by a different route to Moscow, and, after a second stay there, came home by Leningrad, arriving back in London on December 19th.

One of the advisory delegates spent another ten days studying rural and political conditions in the Ukraine and Moldavia, and came home by Odessa and Constantinople.

During our journey from London to Moscow we travelled through Belgium, Germany, Lithuania and Latvia, and through the agricultural districts of Russia to Moscow, arriving in Moscow on Tuesday, November 11th.

The journey was not without incidents of an interesting character even before we arrived at the Russian frontier. At Bertha, we were informed that the official delegation appointed by the Government of Germany to proceed to Moscow for the purpose of discussing a trading agreement between Germany and Russia was to occupy another portion of the same train in which we were travelling. No detailed comment is necessary to indicate what we considered to be a remarkable coincidence, namely that having just left our own country after a severe attack on the Labor Party because of its attempt to arrange a trading agreement with Russia, we should on our way be joined on the same train by the official representatives of a country which for many years has been our most successful competitor, especially in Russian markets—representatives who were charged with the special task of promoting the trading interests of their own country.

On our way to Russia we were met at Riga (Latvia) by the official representatives of the Soviet Government. The Ambassador and other officials who received the Delegation at the Russian Embassy in the name of the Soviet Government expressed the hope that our investigations would enable us to obtain the facts and convey the truth to the workers of our own and other countries.

After this brief first introduction to Russian representatives we proceeded to Moscow accompanied by official representatives of the All-Russian Trades Union and some of the officials attached to the Moscow Trade Union center.

The first impression we received in Soviet Russia was on our arrival at the frontier station of Sebezh. The entrance into Soviet Russia at the frontier was marked by a specially constructed arch upon which were displayed on a red cloth covering, various mottoes with which we were well acquainted in our own language. These declared the international solidarity of the workers, and informed all who entered this new country that the main purpose of Russia was the building up of an economic system which would eliminate the capitalist. Here we were also introduced to representatives of Russia's Red Army. It was the first time that the majority of the members of the Delegation had seen an army raised and organized by workers for the purpose of defending a State controlled by themselves.

The present frontier town of Sebezh was formerly an almost unknown and unimportant village consisting of 500 individuals. It is now becoming an important frontier center, and building operations for housing the people were in progress. The first building to be erected after the workers' houses had been built was the workmen's club. This club had been erected by the workers themselves in their spare time as a voluntary contribution to their own cause. We saw the first attempt at a library, the first lecture room, and the first form of rural education which have ever been known in this area, and we were here also confronted with an important economic fact. We were privileged to inspect eight enormous railway engines, newly constructed, up-to-date, with all the modern appliances for heavy transport service, there being the first instalment of a contract order given to Sweden for 180 of the same type. We could not avoid noting the great importance of this first lesson, and we regretted very much indeed that we were not able to bring the British electorate to this spot for the purpose of reconsidering

their decision at the last election. We had no doubt that our engineering employers and also the shareholders and investors in engineering works would have required a few hours' solitude for the purpose of considering their position in view of this manifestation that if Great Britain will not take the opportunity for commercial extension of the Russian market, other countries, including Sweden, France, and Germany, will be before us, and at a later date it will be no longer a question of election decisions to keep out of Russia but of commercial competition to get in.

At various centers our train was pulled up for the purpose of enabling us to receive a welcome from the officials and representatives of the Soviet Government and workers' unions. The space which would be necessary to convey to the mind of the reader our rapidly accumulated impressions would occupy many pages of this report, and in this, the introductory section we can only give the barest outline of our experiences at way-side stations of Soviet Russia. There were demonstrations of enthusiastic workers—men and women—with banners flying, beautifully embroidered with gold and silver mottoes artistically designed and very impressive. Our deepest impressions were received in relation to the bands of children known as "Young Pioneers," who were lined up to take the front place in these receptions. Their singing of revolutionary songs reminiscent of the folk-songs of our country, were inspiring but melancholy and full of depth. We seemed to be called back through the centuries of persecution, and we felt that through this revolutionary music we could hear the wailing cry of a people long oppressed brought into contact with a glimpse of freedom and hope for a better future.

The children appeared to us to be happy. They were undoubtedly well-cared for. Their eyes were bright and full of young life. We saw no signs amongst them of extreme poverty, and it appeared to us that a special effort was being made to make the lives of the young happier and more pleasant by the changes which had already been made. As a contrast to these, we noticed, standing among the representatives of the present generation, many old people who had evidently passed through a period of great trial, oppression, and persecution. They bore on their faces indelible marks of the terrible conditions of the past and the scars of war. The haunted expression of persecuted men was still left in their eyes, and the contrast to us was a most eloquent expression of the difference between the old order and the new.

Members of our Delegation who had visited Russia in connection with the 1920 Delegation, gave us information which indicated the very great contrast between the conditions of these people at the way-side stations and the conditions which existed during the previous visit. The demonstrations in 1920 consisted mainly of large crowds of people—youth, middle-aged, and old—who had covered their starving bodies with rags and who were evidently going through a period of extreme misery. This contrast was the first sign of the rapid improvement in



social conditions which we have witnessed throughout Russia and place on record in this report. To members of the Delegation who had resided in Russia many years before the war, other changes were made evident. The improved cleanliness, as compared with pre-war days of buildings, such as restaurants and even lavatories, used by the peasants and the working class, was very marked. The stations and station buildings were entirely free from the accumulation of cigarette ends and the husks of sun-dower seeds, also the defacement of the walls which were so prevalent before the war. Another impression was received in conversation with the employes in charge of the railway carriage in which the Delegation travelled. These conductors and other employes were now State employes. We were travelling with three officials of the Government, yet the employes discussed freely the conditions under which they lived and stated frankly their personal objections with regard to some of the restrictions under which they worked. This to some extent, refutes the idea that expressions of this kind were unsafe or unwise in Soviet Russia.

On our arrival in Moscow we were met by officials of the All-Russian Central Council of Trade Unions, and after making hotel arrangements we were conducted to the Sixth Congress of the All-Russian Trade Unions. This Congress was attended by 843 delegates, representing approximately a membership of 6,000,000 Trade Unionists throughout Russia. We noted a great variety in type and temperament, as will be understood in view of the fact that Russia includes a population of about 130,000,000, with from 120 to 130 distinct nationalities. The arrival of the British Delegation aroused great enthusiasm. Three speakers were appointed to speak on behalf of the Delegation—the Chairman, Mr. A. A. Purcell, the Secretary, Mr. Fred Bramley, and Mr. Ben Tillett. The speeches were followed with great attention and the point of view expressed in conveying the fraternal greetings on behalf of the British Trade Union Movement was wholly endorsed by this remarkable gathering.

The All-Russian Trades Union Congress was held in a building known as the "Hall of Trade Unions," a magnificent building which has been placed at the disposal of the Trade Union organizations of Moscow by the Soviet authorities. It was formerly known as the Noble's Club, and was utilized by the Russian aristocracy as one of their principal centers for receptions and amusement, including what might be described as high speed gambling on an intensive scale. The Congress Hall was magni-



nificently illuminated and decorated inside and out for the purpose of the Congress. Along each side of the building there were huge white pillars with carved capitals, and these pillars were artistically decorated with red cloth, on which were printed various mottoes in the form of declarations of Soviet principles and policy. We were later conducted round this building, which contains the offices and club of the Moscow Trades Council and in which a good deal of the Trade Union business in connection with Trade Union organization is transacted. The premises were kept in perfect order and cleanliness, and along the corridors we noticed some magnificent specimens of art in metal, marble and stone. On the walls many fine pictures were hung, some of them representing the old order, others painted by revolutionary artists depicting in vivid outline the main incidents of the Revolution and the aspirations of Russian democracy.

We were taken into the Council Chamber where the nobles, under the old regime, held their meetings, in the centre of which was placed a round table around which were beautifully carved chairs, each one of them decorated with the coat of arms of the Grand Duke or other aristocrat, who occupied the chair.

It is our duty to place on record here our impression that the works of art and all other centers of Trade Unions and Government activity have been very specially cared for by the authorities whether the treasures represented the old order or the new. There is no evidence of abuse, and every respect is shown to the art creations taken over by the new social organization in Russia.

The Delegation also visited the Mausoleum in which the body of Lenin still lies in state, and in the name of British Trade Unions deposited a special wreath to mark our respect to the departed leader. This burial place of Lenin is erected close to the Kremlin walls and constitutes an impressive and tragic memory of the Revolution.

While in Moscow we witnessed a huge demonstration of Trade Union delegates with bands and banners, that passed the specially erected stand outside the Congress Hall occupied by the British Delegation and other Trade Union representatives. The huge space was packed by thousands of workers who gave expression to unreserved enthusiasm and interest in our Delegation. The march past was a magnificent sight. Huge battalions of workers with banners of various kinds, many of them beauti-

ful examples of art in cloth, gold, and metal. This conveyed to us the message that art and handicraft are closely allied to the revolutionary sentiments which now inspire the Russian people.

The most moderate estimate of this demonstration was at least 100,000 people assembled for the purpose of giving a united reception to the British Delegation. The speeches delivered by the British representatives were well received.

We attended a demonstration of quite another kind on the morning of our first Sunday spent in Russia. The Delegation, along with Russian and other representatives attending the Congress, were invited to view the maneuvers of the special cavalry detachment of the Red Army, known as Budenny cavalry. Budenny, the Commander-in-Chief, is known as a famous cavalry leader. The honorary colonel of this regiment is the President of the All-Russian Trades Union Council, and reports are given direct from the regiment to the Congress. The representatives of the battalion in the same way as reports are given regarding other department work under the control of the council. The mounted cavalry gave us some wonderful demonstrations of horsemanship and military movement and the manipulation of artillery equipment was a new experience for the representatives of British Labor. We were here witnessing the operations of the first disciplined, armed and trained force created and utilized for the defence of working-class institutions, an important detachment of an army of well-equipped, well-trained soldiers kept in existence by the workers themselves, organized, and working under the orders of their officers appointed and recognized by a working-class organization. We are not quite sure what those who are included in organizations in Great Britain known as pacifists, would have to say regarding this demonstration. It appears, however, to be an indispensable necessity so far as the Russian Republic is concerned. Every precaution is taken in Russia by those in authority and responsible for the social and economic life in the country to make adequate provision for the defence of the present social order against all enemies, including the danger of counter-revolution and attacks upon the Soviet State from without.

In Moscow we visited various institutions, and saw much that was of very great interest. We saw performances at the Opera House, and in particular, in a department of the organization of Russian talent at the Congress Hall, including a huge orchestra, special groups of Russian dancers, well organized choirs representing the gipsy tribes of Russia, and the peasant singers of the agricultural areas. The singing of their peasant songs and folk songs was extremely interesting to the Delegation, and the performance would, in our opinion, receive the enthusiastic applause of the most severe of our musical critics. The Russian people are great artists, great musicians, and idealists. The Russian temperament as reflected in this magnificent display of talent at the Congress Hall and other places, conveyed to us the fact that in Russia music and art and even amusement are recognized as important instruments of social education. They are encouraged and developed by the Socialist Government for this purpose.

We were also favored with special facilities to investigate the Kremlin, and we passed through various Government buildings and offices. We cannot in a report of this kind attempt to describe the many beautiful examples of architecture and the marvellous collection of Russian craftsmanship of many ages, treasured in one of the buildings which is set apart for the purpose of a national museum. We must however, again place on record the fact that in passing through the throne room, the living apartments and the state bedrooms, formerly occupied by the royal family, we noticed not the slightest case of damage to the very beautiful decorations and furniture in these apartments. This appeared to us as evidence that the alleged destructiveness of the Revolution was not allowed to penetrate inside the Kremlin walls.

Visits were also paid to the principal prisons, where we visited the workshops and living apartments utilized by those serving terms of imprisonment for criminal offences. The prisoners work at various occupations. At the Boutirka prison we saw the saw-mill, chair-making factory, tailoring shop, bake-house, and laundry, and were very much impressed by the occupational organization inside this prison. Many of the prisoners before internment were not trained for any skilled occupation, and we noted that in the boot-making department, a number of young men were going through a period of apprenticeship. The prison is kept in a satisfactory state of cleanliness. We saw the food, saw the bills of fare, and were much pleased to see that prisoners in what were once the worst prisons in Europe are permitted to enjoy a fair standard of comfort, are treated with very great humanity, and get good opportunities for a fresh start.

During our visit to this prison, we were allowed to interview the members of the Central Committee of the Socialist Revolutionary Party, who were in prison, as some of our readers will know, for alleged plotting against the present Government. These prisoners are kept in the Political Section of the prison. They are housed in separate rooms along a main corridor, in which we understand they are permitted to meet together. In this general preface we cannot enter into a detailed account of our discussion with these political prisoners, representing a revolutionary movement in which they played a very prominent part with great personal ability. A later section of the report will deal more fully with this question. They spoke very freely with us in private and also in public, and their own officials they made very definite and clear their opposition to the present Soviet system. Their indignation regarding their own treatment was mild compared with the free expression of their bitter disapproval of the treatment which they alleged their comrades were receiving at the hands of the Soviet Authority in Georgia, and other parts of Russia, where we were led to understand by the Social Revolutionaries there is a strong and deep-seated dis-

approval of the present system. The report on Trans-Caucasia dealing with this question will indicate to what extent we were able to test the accuracy or otherwise of these allegations.

On the 23rd November, the Delegation divided into two sections and left Moscow for the purpose of visiting important centres of industrial activity in Russia. We made our own plans and decided for ourselves our own line of inquiry and the places which we proposed to visit.

The program of the Delegation on this tour included an investigation of the industries, mines, workshops, social and housing conditions, and trade unions in Kharkov, the Donetz Basin, Bakum, Baku, Tiflis, Yelovka, Strozovka, Tskhumi, Rostov, Kislovodsk, Tiflis, the oil industry of Grozny and Baku; the mines at Chiatour, and the electricity plant at Zemochavals. On its return to Moscow the Delegation again divided and visited Chatura and the Moscow Aircraft Works before proceeding to the Leningrad area and the Volkhovstroil electric power station.

At Kharkov we inspected the principal industries. We were shown round a well-equipped and extensive factory, which employs 3,000 workers in producing agricultural machinery. Going through the foundry, the engineering shops, and wood working departments, we noted production being conducted on a very large scale. We were met by enthusiastic groups of workers, who rushed forward to meet us, and expressed spontaneous gratitude for visiting them, and their wishes for the development of a mutual understanding between British and Russian workers. The same kind of welcome awaited us at a large electrical works.

We were shown round this well appointed engineering establishment, where we saw huge dynamos, in process of manufacture, with workers representing a very high degree of skill, and employed in producing electrical equipment intended for the industries and for the towns and cities and agricultural villages of the Soviet Republic. The managerial chiefs of this factory impressed us very much indeed with their business capacity, and the very high degree of technical knowledge of the industry for which they were responsible.

Kharkov is the chief city of the Ukraine. It has been the centre of many a Red and White troops. The army of Denikin had been able to inflict considerable damage to the railways, to the roads, and to the bridges in this area. Bridges were destroyed, and great damage to public buildings was noted, and the railway still bore the destructive marks of warfare and the clearest possible indication of the ravages of the civil war. The conflicts of the civil war had left their mark in every direction on this place.

We were taken to the Trade Union center, where the business connected with the Ukrainian Trade Unions is transacted. This center represents 1,117,000 Trade Unionists, and its buildings were formerly used as an office for the largest insurance company in the Empire. Twenty-three unions now transact their business in these premises. The Trade Union Council of Kharkov also meets in the same building and represents 160,000 Trade Union members in the city. The meetings of the Executives of all the Ukrainian unions are held on these premises, and also the meetings of the Bureaus. The weekly joint meetings of all local bodies for the Health, and Unemployment Insurance business of the State are also transacted in the same building.

The Centre of Government for the Ukrainian Republic was also visited, and we were introduced to the President, Petrovsky, who gave us a most interesting account of the development of Soviet control in the Ukrainian Republic. The President was a Member of the Fourth Duma in Russia and one of the five members arrested and sentenced to life exile for protesting against the war in 1914. He was tried by court martial in 1915, and sent thousands of miles away from any railway system, isolated from all contact with friends and relatives, and was removed from any possible contact with the agencies of the Revolutionary movement.

The Presidium of Kharkov meets in a magnificent building of great architectural beauty, formerly occupied by a banking company. In this building we were amazed and interested to see some extremely fine examples of peasant art, including elaborate panels of embroidery in gold and silk, and woodwork and metal, wonderfully reminiscent of the kind of things we read about at home in connection with the life of William Morris and his attempts to revive the beauty and skill of craftsmanship.

In conversation with the President as to whether the Ukrainian peasant accepted the present system of Soviet control, a system based on Communism, we were informed that 70 per cent of them took part in recent elections and supported the Soviet system by substantial votes, and are now supporting the system with taxes which are collected without difficulty; and although the peasant is a strong individualist his prompt payment of taxes, his interest in political elections, and his support of the Soviet Government, indicated general satisfaction with the present regime.

We were, however, informed that they were not quite untroubled by neighboring States. They had to deal with armed bandits who overrun the frontiers occasionally and illegal bands of marauders who call themselves White Guards for their own purposes; and on this point a remarkable statement was made to us, namely, that the enemies of Soviet Russia had driven large numbers of the poor population of Poland over the borders to be maintained by the Ukrainian Authorities.

After leaving Kharkov, we visited Rostov, and here we found the public buildings, the shops, clubs, and institutions of a rather better order than in most of the Russian towns and villages we visited.

We were well received by the local people and were entertained at a workmen's club, which had formerly been utilized as a bank. The interior decoration of this building and the general type of architecture was one of a design representing a very high standard.

From Rostov we traveled to Grozny, making a call during the day at Kislovodsk. This is a town famed for its mineral springs, and was formerly visited by the wealthiest families of Russia, Germany, and other parts of Europe as a health and holiday resort. Here we visited several institutions, holiday houses, and rest houses established in houses built by the aristocracy and luxuriously furnished in former days for their own purposes.

We arrived at Kislovodsk on one of the finest days of our tour. It was almost like summer, and the mild, warm air and beautiful sunshine proved an acceptable change to the Delegation. We visited the workmen's clubs and convalescent homes, and there is no doubt that this famous health resort is now being utilized by the Trade Unions for the purpose of giving health and medical attention to those who most need it as a result of their active services in industry.

On our arrival at Grozny, we immediately proceeded to inspect the five oilfields we had been able to see in Russia. We were introduced to the process of tapping these natural springs of valuable oil, which formerly provided profits from which millionaires were made. In all directions we noticed the precious oil bubbling to the surface of the earth, ready for the simplest methods of extraction. The fluid, which in all parts of the world has caused no less diplomatic differences and national jealousies than any other raw material, is to be found in great abundance in this area.

We were extremely interested by what we saw and learned here. We were able to see the miserable hovels which the millionaire oil monopolists had erected for the purpose of housing the workers under the old system, and as a contrast we were able to look round the model village which was being built by the Soviet Republic authorities. The profits from the oil wells are now being used for the purpose of creating improved housing conditions for the workers. During our inspection of these houses we were impressed by the up-to-date architectural design, and inside we were gratified that in relation to air space, sanitary conveniences, and general opportunities for comfort, the houses were in many respects as good as the model cottages being built in England in connection with Government schemes.

From Grozny, we travelled to Baku, where we visited the most famous oilfields in the world; and here again we saw very striking evidence of the effect of Soviet rule and also the destructive effect of the struggle of the workers of the oilfield nations to obtain possession of this immensely valuable oilfield. Here the wells exist in great number, and the equipment is on a large scale. Since the Revolution the plant has been electrified, and on the oilfield itself there is a large electrical department, where huge dynamos are at work, and the Soviet authorities have expeditiously carried out a scheme which had been discussed by private monopolists of the oilfields for over ten years.

During the investigation of the oilfields of Baku we were amazed and disgusted with the conditions of housing the workers which had formerly existed under private control. The living places were not built to suit the needs of the workers, the names of houses would be wrong, and the nearest description we can give is the out-houses one finds in the worst slum areas at home. Long rows of dimly lighted buildings, one story high, with small windows and low-built doorways, and in some cases no flooring but the earth. In these hovels herds of people of various nationalities had been packed together, and the conditions that would subject the owner of cattle in our own country to prosecution for cruelty if he kept his animals in a similar state. We have no hesitation in saying that these conditions of housing the people were the vilest and worst we have seen in Russia or in any parts of the world known to any of the Delegation. When we remembered that the count of districts in this district can be counted in hundreds of millions of poods and that millions have been created in abundance from these oilfields, our indignation and disgust at the treatment of the workers was unlimited.

As a contrast to these conditions, we were able to visit the new houses now being built out of oil profits by the Soviet Republic of the workers. The change can only properly be described as a remarkable revolution in the housing of the people. In addition to this we were very much impressed by the great changes which the Soviet Government is making in the social life in this the most famous oil center in the world. The profits from the oil industry, in addition to being used for housing, are being used for educational purposes, and have already been utilized for the development of a very efficient educational tramway service, which had also been discussed as a project for many years by the millionaire capitalists, who drew enormous wealth from this area but left it in a backward, and one may also state, an uncivilized condition. The workmen's clubs and social institutions are utilized as centers of education for the workers. Further information regarding these institutions will be given in another part of the report.

From Baku, we travelled to Tiflis, and we were met by an enthusiastic demonstration of workers and Trade Union officials. We spent several days investigating factories both in Tiflis and the surrounding districts, and visited institutions, the Trade Union center, and the President of the Soviet Republic. We visited a large railway shop, in which somewhere about 3,000 workmen are being employed in producing railway stock. Members of the Delegation addressed a mass meeting of the railway workers, and our visit was wound up by a remarkable demonstration in the main thoroughfare, witnessed by the Delegation from a special stand erected in the main street of the city. A demonstration which was organized by us to contrast the workers of Tiflis were not in that state of oppression and subjection which certain reports we have read would appear to indicate. The demonstration appeared to reflect the strong, united approval of the workers in the present system of government in Georgia.

While visiting Tiflis we were aware that this city was the most contentious part of our tour, and special reference regarding our stay in Georgia will be found in the main body of the report. We have, however, to say here that our experiences in Georgia did not bear out the general impression which is being created by reports appearing in the capitalist Press and other newspapers intended to convey the impression that the population of Georgia is being held down in a state of suppression by a Russian Red Army of occupation.

We returned to Moscow from Tiflis and continued our investigations into industry, Government institutions, workmen's clubs, rest-houses, and other places. We also concluded our special inquiry into the alleged Zinoviev Letter used against the Labor Party during the election, and the results will be published.

We next visited the home of the Russian Revolution—Leningrad—and spent four days there for the purpose of visiting industrial undertakings, government departments, hospitals, orphanages, and other social institutions in and around the town. The reception of the Delegation at Leningrad exceeded any other demonstration of our tour. The civil population appeared in many thousands, lining the main thoroughfares of the city. A large demonstration was addressed by members of the Delegation, and the march through the city to our headquarters, headed by large battalions of sailors singing revolutionary songs and escorted by regiments of soldiers will long be remembered by every member of the Delegation.

At Leningrad, we were conducted through the Winter Palace and passed through the royal apartments of the Czars. The magnificence and splendor of these rooms crowded with works of art, luxuriously furnished and in every way equipped with the most modern civilization can produce, contrasted vividly with the extreme poverty of the Russian people which we know existed prior to the Revolution. In these apartments we noticed an abundance of works of art in gold and silver, inlaid with precious stones of priceless value. The reading rooms, libraries, sleeping apartments, drawing-rooms and State rooms of the Royal Palace are provided with these gems. These apartments are now kept as a museum and the royal treasures are held in the name of the people. With the exception of one section of the palace, we saw no sign of any destruction due to violence within the walls of the palace. In every room, the books, paintings, chairs, tables, etc., were left exactly as they had been occupied by the royal residents and there had been no speedy invasion by a horde of angry proletarians seeking possession of royal property such as we have had described in the columns of our capitalist newspapers. What will be the ultimate destiny of this royal home of the Czars, this centre of oppression and persecution of a long-suffering people, we cannot say. In the meantime, one part of the royal palace is utilized to demonstrate the luxury of the old regime and the other is used as a revolutionary museum containing remarkable and startling evidence of the cruelties and barbarities practised upon the political opponents of the old order during the many years of revolutionary effort to establish the new.

The reader will require to read other books dealing with the royal palace to secure a full picture. We visited the scene of the massacre of Bloody Sunday (see frontispiece to Report), and penetrated inside the walls and into the rooms from which the orders were given to destroy the lives of the people clamoring for the barest recognition of political rights, but not without feelings of antagonism to the old order of autocracy and oppression.

We also, during our visit to Leningrad, visited the burial place of the martyrs of the revolution and we could not leave this spot after our visit to the Winter Palace without being deeply impressed with the evidence of the long and bitter struggle that had taken place between the workers of Russia and their oppressors.

From Leningrad we started our return journey back to England, leaving there on December 15th, and arriving at Dover four days later. The Delegation had been occupied almost night and day either in travelling from one place to another or in investigating the conditions of Russia as thoroughly as time and opportunity would allow.

We have placed ourselves in the following reports the truth as we were able to observe and understand it. There are many problems with which we have not been able to deal, many institutions were not able to investigate. We have placed on record the results of our labors in the hope that what we have to say will be of interest and use to those who desire to understand Russia and who are prepared without bias to examine the consequences which arise from the control of this great country by the workers who reside in it and who have secured this control by facing indescribable dangers and going through suffering unparalleled in the history of world conflicts between race and race, class and class, and one form of civilization and another.

During our investigations we were assisted by experts who knew Russia and could speak the language, who had resided in Russia for years and who were well-informed regarding Russian institutions. We were not therefore, as many critics have said, in any way at the mercy of the appointed guides and interpreters of the Russian Government.

In this connection the Delegation unitedly wish to express their recognition of the services of the advisory committee whose official training and traditions have enabled the Delegation to reproduce the character of an official report. In the following General Report, Chapter VI, on the Army was prepared by Captain Grenfell; Chapters I. to V. inclusive and VII. of Part I. (the Soviet Government System) were prepared by Mr. Young; Chapters VII., IX., X. of Part II. (the Soviet Social System) by Mr. McDonnell; the Report on Labor Conditions; the Report on Trans-Caucasia were prepared by Mr. Young with the assistance of Mr. McDonnell. The Report on the "Zinoviev" letter

is being published separately. All these reports embody the unanimous conclusions arrived at by the delegates before leaving Russia.

Herbert Smith.  
Ben Tillett.  
John Turner.  
John Bromley.  
Alan Findlay.  
Albert Purcell (Chairman).  
Fred Bramley (Secretary).

## INTRODUCTION

In publishing the following reports on present conditions in the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics the British Trades Union Delegation has done its best to the time and with the means at its disposal to present an objective review of the Russian Revolution in its most recent phases. Anyone who, like some members of that Delegation, is in a position to compare conditions at the height of War Communism in 1920 with those now prevailing under the New Economic Policy will realize at once that reports on conditions even late as 1921 are worse than useless for arriving at an appreciation of present circumstances. The Russian Revolution is still developing with great rapidity both in its economic, political, and social organizations; but so far as can be humanly foreseen it will now continue to develop along the lines indicated in the following reports. There is no further necessity for, or probability of, another re-orientation such as that of the New Economic Policy, which has made most of the information, based on conditions of War Communism, so misleading.

The British Delegation does not wish to be regarded as apologists for the principles and procedures of Russian Communism—still less as advocates of its adoption in this country. "War Communism" was a product of Tsarism and intervention, and the "New Economic Policy" is a compromise adapted to economic and political conditions in the Union. But misrepresentations as to results of the Russian Revolution have been used as a "red herring" to divert and distract the British people from the pursuit of reforms and reconstructions essential to their own peace and prosperity.

The Trade Union Congress, therefore, feels it necessary to do all in its power to put the British electorate in possession of the real facts in Russia. The object of this report is to enable the British electorate, in the first place, to realize that the Russian Revolution has no real relationship at all to British evolution, and, in the second place, that the present results of the Revolution are represented by a new State, already very powerful and likely to be very prosperous.

As to the equipment of the Delegation for this task it will perhaps be enough to say that in respect of the Trade Union Delegates it was composed of men whose political tradition tended to make them critical of the Communist philosophy and policy, and who had each an expert knowledge of, at least, one of the branches of industry under inspection. Further, the advisory delegates were men who had long official training in inquiring into and reporting on foreign countries, and who had the thorough knowledge of the language and of Russia under previous conditions. These advisory delegates were in a position to get into contact with opposition opinion and to take a point of view other than that of Labor partisans will be evident from an incident mentioned in the report on Georgia.

The public utterances of the Delegation in Russia were naturally concerned with that which it was honestly able to admire and applaud in what it saw of the results of the Russian Revolution. This publication now as honestly conveys all that it found to criticize. It will be no doubt be rejected by some readers on the ground that the Delegation's activities were controlled—or even that artificial conditions were constructed for its benefit. As to this the following reports must answer for themselves. It should, it is hoped, be obvious that an inquiry of this character conducted by specialists, though it may, in spite of every precaution, contain mistakes, could not be based on general misconceptions or misrepresentations.

The Delegation was given every official facility for the prosecution of its inquiry—and without such ready and reliable assistance it would have been impossible to have covered so wide a field or to have gone so far below the surface as it is hoped these reports will prove was done. And as, in the present condition of opinion, this official assistance will of itself be a cause of suspicion, the Delegation would add that its conclusions are based on data obtained from sources by its own experts, and that in each important particular it has checked the official point of view with that of the opposition.

There was no difficulty in getting contact with opinion of every shade. Each member of the delegation had an authorization which enabled him to enter into any Government building, factory, club, hospital, police court, prison, or private house without a guide and without any previous notice. These authorizations were made full use of by the members who spoke the language and knew the country. The Delegation came well provided with means of getting into touch with opposition opinion, and was kept continuously in contact with it. The only case of interference with such communications and the action taken by the Delegation, is dealt with in the report on Georgia. Moscow was not impeded in this business; it showed that had any such case occurred in the Russian Federation it would not have escaped the Delegation's notice.

The object, then, of these reports is to review the advantages and disadvantages accruing to the people of Russia under the new system of Government, and whether the balance either way is tending to increase or diminish.

In this respect the most contentious point is the degree of political liberty for the individual resulting from the recent re-orientations of the Russian Revolution, especially since the

abandonment of War Communism. In this respect, on the point of principle, the Delegation takes note of the assertion of the present rulers that the present administration is a "dictatorship of the proletariat" under the direction of the Communist Party, and that "democracy" as understood elsewhere has no place in it. This amounts to a denial in principle of individual political liberty as hitherto understood. And in practice there is a complete control not only of the Press, the platform and political meetings, the present administration, universities, and Army. It is obvious that a political system based on the assumption of such government authority by a minority can be judged best by results. It is with these results, not with the political philosophy of Russian Communism, that these reports are mainly concerned.

A reading of these reports, however, may suggest a conclusion, that is very probably correct, that the control by the Communists of the central authority is not so absolute as is claimed. The present tendency seems to be that the Communist organization is becoming more and more distinct from the Government, more and more a religion—a sort of State Church with an educational function. The governmental organs and the representative system are moving rapidly along lines that make their central control by a Communist caucus increasingly difficult. In other words, recent developments are towards a "democracy" in the sense of a Government based on the expressed approval of a majority of the electorate, not merely on its tacit acceptance.

The Soviet system at present consists of a series of compromises, most of them in constant change. One of the most striking characteristics of the present regime is its readiness to recognize failure. Should a Communist theory fail to give the required results it is scrapped for all practical purposes as ruthlessly as any Tsarist tradition. On the other hand, should ideas or institutions or institutions associated with the old order prove useful instruments there is no hesitation in using them.

At the same time, the precautions intended to prevent these compromises from carrying revolution right round into reaction have been very carefully elaborated as a result of constant experience, and have so far been effective. The main safeguards are an absolute control of the press, the main commerce and concessions; and the supervision of all large private capitalistic enterprises through inspectors recruited from the working class operating under experts. Meantime, the Russian Communists hope that education of the younger generation in a collectivist creed and a civic-conscience instilled with all the fervour of a religion will remove any risk of a relapse into reaction when the present precautions are relaxed.

Although Russian Communists themselves repudiate any suggestion that there has been a change in the fundamental principles of their political creed, or anything more than temporary tactical retirements, yet it seems clear to the Delegation that the present Communist system has by way of complicated compromises arrived at a condition that is not Communism, but would be better described as a form of State Socialism or State Capitalism; and this without prejudice to the preaching of Communist ideals and the practice of severe devotion and discipline by those who take the vows. This is the same process that very rapidly took place in the case of other creeds that had originally a Communist character.

The conclusions arrived at by the Delegation as to the main compromises now in force in political, financial, economic, commercial, judicial, and social affairs will be found at the end of each chapter, and a final verdict at the end of Part I of the Report on Labor Conditions. In presenting these conclusions its members have tried not to be misled by the atmosphere of cordiality and confidence which surrounded them from their arrival in Moscow, or by the attitude of sympathy for, and solidarity with, their fellow-workers in which they left London. They have earnestly endeavoured to present a report such as any body of their fellow countrymen would have made had it the same facilities. They are well aware that it would have been much better done had the resources of the British Government been available for what is properly a governmental function—the publication of reliable information as to political, social, and commercial conditions of one of the principal European peoples. But no official information has been so published that might counteract the ridiculous slanders by which public opinion in this country is misled. As, moreover, there can be no peace and progress in European civilization until the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics is admitted on a basis of general agreement to a free and friendly footing in the community of peoples, the Trades Union Congress General Council has undertaken this task, and its Delegation has endeavoured to carry it out with a full sense of its responsibilities.

## GENERAL REPORT.

### PART I

## GOVERNMENT SYSTEM.

### CHAPTER I

#### Political.

##### Federalism and Nationalism

The Russian Revolution, after revolving to the left with great rapidity, reached its noon-tide in the War Communism of 1920, and since then has been returning by the right through a series of very complicated compromises. Of these compromises, one of the most interesting, and possibly the most instructive for other States of federal-structure, is the combination of nationalism and internationalism, and the authority and local autonomy, achieved in the Union constitution.

The Revolution was originally international in its ideals, but the refusal of other countries to respond to its appeals, and the reprisals of unrevolutionized Governments against the Revolution in the series of raids into Russia, soon gave the revolu-

tionary Government a national character. If the Union still owes much of its structure to internationalism, it now owes most of its strength to nationalism.

But of all European Empires that of Russia was the most variegated in the national cultures of its minorities, and the first effect of the Revolution was to raze those minorities from the repression and russification to which they had been subjected under Tsarism. The result was that on the one side there was created a novel and highly centralized State Socialism, and on the other new and highly sensitive local nationalities. It was this apparent divergence that was exploited in the interventions of the foreign enemies of the Revolution. Had the revolutionary regime had an imperialist and not an internationalist facade and a bureaucratic, not a socialist foundation, it might certainly have fallen when Koltchak or Denikin advanced to within a few miles of Moscow.

That it did not so fall but was instead fortified by the strain was, no doubt, due to the fact that in a State structure founded on socialist solidarity the nationalist sentiment of minorities can exist and even be encouraged without danger of separatism. The revolutionary regime in Moscow has consequently been able to allow every regional, racial, and religious minority such autonomy as would satisfy the quantity and quality of its national sentiment. The result is an association of more or less amalgamated autonomous Federations and Republics as an national a growth and as varied a relationship as that of the British Empire, but without the friction and antagonisms from which the British Empire has suffered and still suffers.

It is its first stage the rule of the R. S. F. S. R. and the role of Moscow as the central authority were in their undefined character not unlike those of the United Kingdom and of London over the Empire. But as a result of a treaty concluded in December, 1922, the Act of Union of July 16th, 1922 incorporated the four sovereign Soviet Federations in one Commonwealth or Union. The authority of the Union is constitutionally restricted to the powers given by the Act of Union under the contract of these Federations. The autonomies of the subordinate Republics, on the other hand, are restricted to the terms of their concessions from the sovereign Federations. The resulting relationships are very interesting and important, but an investigation of them from the material at the Delegation's disposal would lead too far from the main object of this report. An idea of the constitutional interdependence of the various constituents of the Union can be got from the annexed diagram.

##### Character of the Union

It results therefrom that though the Revolution was Russian the Union is not. The Union is, in its ideal, an international institution. Moreover, not only has any nation outside the Union a right of adhesion to the Union, and any nation inside a right of secession from it, but a worker of any nationality, whether within or without the Union, if he or she is resident in the Union, has the right to demand the right of citizenship there. The Union is not Russia, but U. S. S. R. Its Army is not the Russian Army but the Red Army. Its flag is the Red Flag of Universal Brotherhood. Its silver coinage has for device the sickle and hammer, and for motto, "Workers of the World Unite."

This is one side of the shield. The other aspect is that Moscow, in fact, governs the Union, and the same men who rule the Russian Federation rule also the Union. Moreover, the present tendency is towards making the Union, that is, Moscow, all-powerful, while at the same time giving Home Rule to every race or region that asks for it. How can these two policies be carried on conjointly without coming into collision? How can new nationalities in the first flush of freedom after long subjection to repression and russification be got on the one hand to accept, without friction, federal control, on the other hand to accord, without force, full autonomy to their own cultural minorities?

##### The Ukraine

The Delegation had an opportunity of getting an answer in Kharkov, the capital of the Ukraine. Kharkov is the most prosperous industrial town of the Ukraine, itself the most prosperous region of the Union. The Ukraine, as the most of us called, Little Russia, is also the center and source of the music, poetry, painting, and craftsmanship, of the costumes and customs, that represent for us Russian culture. It is proud of this cultural superiority to Great Russia, White Russia, and the other regions, and is profiting fully by its new liberty to develop its language and literature in Kharkov, therefore, if anywhere one might expect to find a separatist sentiment. All the more that Communism is not congenial to the Little Russian temperament and tradition.

But Kharkov did not seem jealous of Moscow. Perhaps the bullet-splashes and shell-holes of foreign efforts to exploit such sentiment were still too recent. Perhaps because the Ukrainians after being bullied for centuries by the Tsars for singing their national songs and indulging their national sentiment are very well satisfied with their present bargain with the Union.

The bargain between Moscow and Kharkov seems in itself sound and satisfactory to both parties. Its terms are evident from the moment of stepping off the station platform, where all notices are printed bilingually—Russian in black and Ukrainian in red. Its economic terms become evident on the streets where private trading greatly predominates over that of Government trusts and co-operatives; though out of polite consideration for Communist susceptibilities much private trading is thinly disguised in two or three partners constituting themselves as a co-operative. The bargain is perhaps most evident in the schools and theatres, which are revelling in a regular orgy of national sentiment.

In return the Ukrainian has no objection to an efficient Red Army securing him against being again ravaged by a reactionary

Denikin or a Wrangel or a Petliura. For he has his own magnificent mounted militia in huge shaggy caps and long frogged coats keeping Ukrainian order in Ukrainian streets. The Union collects his taxes and returns him what it can. But he has his own Budget and local revenues to spend on local objects. If his clothes cost him more than in Moscow, his food is cheaper. He works in his factory from eight to two, and after dinner can, if he likes, attend an art school free, which undertakes in three years to teach him to get his living by some art or craft. The night the Delegation was there he could choose for his entertainment between a lecture by Karl Radek (of the Third International), on Leninism, a performance of the no less international "Charley's Aunt," or a highly-national ballet, with topical songs in which jokes about the Soviet system were discreetly veiled in Ukrainian.

Kharkov is to Moscow somewhat as Munich is to Berlin, but instead of being like Munich, a centre of separatism and reaction, it is making a cultural contribution to the Union that will become one of its strongest bonds. All the same Moscow prefers that the Ukrainian capital should be at Kharkov with its industrial proletariat rather than return to the historic capital in agricultural Kiev. For in Kiev, a market center of large farmers, one of the Delegation found there would be some "Sulaks" who, if they no longer feared a fourth occupation by the Whites, might welcome a third evacuation by the Reds.

The success in satisfying national aspirations without sacrificing central authority is in respect of the Ukraine and the principal minorities, the main defensive bulwark of the Union. In respect of other minorities it may undoubtedly become a bastion, not without menace to less successful neighbours. The visit of the Delegation coincided with the creation of several new autonomies, many of them with a significance extending beyond the frontier of the Union. Those in Central Asia could not be brought under investigation and are, therefore, not referred to.

#### Moldavia

But the Autonomous Republic of Moldavia, founded on December 1st, was visited a fortnight later by one of the advisory Delegates. It was found that the establishment of this little Moldavian Community with its population of half-a-million or so, on the borders of Bessarabia was not, as had been supposed, a diplomatic maneuver of Moscow, but a local appeal to, and application of, the right of such a region to Home Rule. It was remarkable, in the first place, that though the establishment of this M. S. S. R. involved the separation from the Ukraine of a territory of some strategic and economic importance, and the secession of a considerable Little Russian population, yet there was apparently no opposition at all in Kharkov to conceding the claim. It was also very recognisable in the second place, that the existence of this free Moldavia developing its own national culture and communal life, must make a very compelling appeal to the kindred population of

the neighboring province of Bessarabia, at present held down by a military occupation of a highly martial character.

With one possible exception—that of Georgia—which is dealt with in a separate report, the Union structure appears to allow a measure of liberty to national minorities that compares very well with that of any other state. Jews in the Soviet State

There has been a persistent effort made to represent the Soviet system as rather Jewish than Russian. Jews are, of course, prominent politically, as they are in all successful and well-established societies. But neither the ideals nor the institutions of the system are Jewish, and such influence as Jews exercise under it is due to their intelligence and competence as public servants, not as elsewhere to their capacity for accumulating private wealth and controlling the machinery of capital and credit. On the international side of Communism, such as the Comintern, Jewish employes are numerous, as is natural enough from their special qualifications. But in the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs they have lost most of the prominence they held in 1920.

In respect of their religion, Jews enjoy an equal tolerance with other religions, and, as will be described later, liberty in respect of religion is much greater not only than before the Revolution but than in many European countries. For example, the Salvation Army is now free to work there.

#### Constitutional Rights

The question of political liberty is one of greater difficulty. The Delegation finds no confirmation of the allegations frequently made that the present Communist regime has deprived the Soviet system set up by the Revolution of all representative character and real vitality. The Soviet system, that is government by committees representing very real relationships, whether political, occupational, or regional, is a spontaneous form of organization that emerges in contemporary revolutions. Attempts to associate it in Russia with the Mir or Village Commune and the Artel or Craft Union are fallacies. And in Russia as elsewhere this primitive revolutionary organization, if it was going permanently to replace the previous governmental structure, had to go through a rapid process of elimination of the unnecessary and evolution of the essential. This process of converting an eruption of primitive organisms into the elaborate governmental organization required by a modern community is being successfully worked out in Moscow. The Soviet system has lost not vitality by being brought nearer to maturity.

The Soviet governmental structure will not be dealt with in detail by this report. It has been fully described elsewhere and is so fundamentally different from other States that a superficial review serves no useful purpose. It must be enough to say that the peculiar principles of its structure, such as the fusion of executive and administrative functions and the foundation of all authority on indirect election; do not of themselves account for the autocratic authority of the present rulers. On

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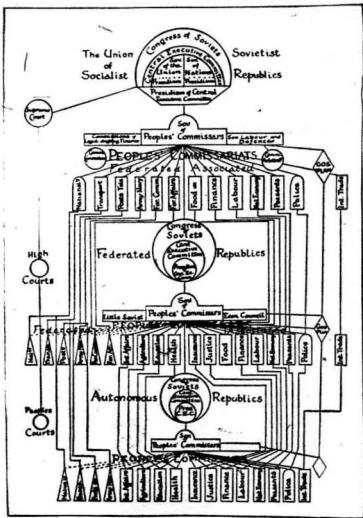
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the contrary, the Soviet system permits a perpetual change of personnel and of policy without the periodic pendulum swings of party politics. It is not to be supposed that the policy of the Union Government remains the same because there has been no general change of politicians or that the politicians remain unchanged because there is no change of party. A glance at the accompanying diagram of the governmental structure will suggest that such a new and strange organism will operate in an unfamiliar manner.

#### Franchise

The franchise is given to all above 18 without distinction of sex or religion, or even nationality. It is restricted theoretically to those who work, which includes soldiers and women houseworkers. Practically it is universal suffrage subject to certain exclusions, such as employers of labour, those living from unearned income, private traders and their agents, priests and monks, lunatics, criminals, and the other usual disqualifications. The franchise and electoral system in Russia can better be understood by approaching it from the point of view of the British Trade Union arrangements than from those of a Parliamentary system.

#### Elections

The procedure of election was first generally regulated by decree of August 31st, 1922, and the actual practice seems still to vary very considerably. Urban, Provincial, District, Parish, and Village Electoral Committees of three members are appointed, representing equally the local authorities and Trade Unions, under a chairman appointed by the Superior Electoral Committee. These committees are in charge of the election and draw up a register of those disfranchised, which is published a week before elections. Protests against disfranchisement must be immediately dealt with by the competent superior committee. The election is carried out in an electoral meeting conducted by the committee or its agents, and organised for each factory, group of villages, or Trade Union branch. The representative of the committee announces the name of the candidates, and voting then takes place by a show of hands or by ballot, and by party lists or by candidate, as may be decided by the Provincial Electoral Committee. This decision was made, previously to the existing regulation, by the meeting itself, and the actual procedure varies very considerably. A show of hands is the most usual method, but in several towns, for example, Orenburg and Kostroma, voting is reported on good authority to be by ballot. Investigations into local elections at Odessa showed no other procedure than show of hands. On one occasion candidates were asked to leave the room during voting; but this was subsequently disallowed. The fact seems to be that conditions of election in Russia are so different in the absence of any possibility of economic pressure on the electors, that there is no demand for secrecy. If an organized opposition to Communism should develop, this demand may have to be met. But the whole electoral system gives the impression that it is at an early stage of development. There does not seem to be anything to prevent any locality from developing it along the lines followed in partisan electoral systems. (In some towns, for example, Orenburg, the voting is said to be conducted on a system of proportional representation.) If less than half the electoral vote, the election is cancelled and held again. On the second occasion, it is final whatever the total vote.

An inquiry was made into the results of local elections in the Odessa Government by an advisory member of the Delegation then present at Odessa. The results in the elections for Odessa Town Soviets showed an increase of Communists and of women. Thus out of 910 acting delegates 530 were Communists, 335 non-party, and 45 Young Communists, while 175 were women. Of the 319 substitute delegates, 111 were Communists, 174 non-party, and 24 Young Communists, while 169 were women. Voting was nearly always by list prepared

by the factory committee or local committee—which were Communist. But there was no hesitation in rejecting candidates thus recommended, in favour of non-partisans. In the rural elections there was said to be a marked increase of interest since last year, about half the electorate attending the electoral meetings, which is satisfactory in view of the season and distances sometimes involved. The list was at least on one occasion the subject of lively discussion, many amendments being made. The numbers of women elected rose from 7 per cent. to 15 per cent. and in some cases was as high as 25 per cent. The percentage of Communists rose from 10 per cent. to 15 per cent., and of soldiers from 1 per cent. to 4 per cent. About half the delegates were re-elected. There was a larger number from the poorest peasantry, the percentage of middle peasants elected falling from 23 per cent. to 20 per cent. No general discontent with the system of elections could be found among the peasants, though points of detail were criticised. And there was evidence of a realisation that the object of the present system was to teach them to govern themselves.

#### Representative System

Political representation in Russia has developed into a very complicated system of indirect election from local to central congresses with cross connections. It would require a volume to deal adequately with its development. Many such have been published, and it can only be indicated here by the annexed diagram. Examination of its workings suggests that the traditional objections to indirect election in a parliamentary system, based solely on regional representation do not apply for the most part to occupational representation as under the Soviet system. Vitality in the electoral function is retained through all the supervening stages of the pyramid. The candidate appeals to the electors on the record of his services, and is ruthlessly rejected if they are insufficient or unsatisfactory, whether he is a Communist or not. And though the system does tend to keep the same men permanently at the top, yet it also keeps them in continuous and close contact with the electorate. Moreover, though the same Government seems to be permanently in power, there is a perpetual penetration of the administration by new men who are the results of promotion by merit. The rulers of the inner ruling circles do not apply for the tacit consent of a great majority of the electorate and the active support of that motive force of the whole machine—the Communist Party.

#### Communism

But the Communist Party is itself changing its character. The New Economic Policy has made quality more important to Russian Communism than quantity. Until then the party was in reality not only the motive force, but an important mechanism of Government. But thereafter it has become an organisation for the promotion of a policy and the preservation of principles that are distinct and may become different from the policy and principles of the Government.

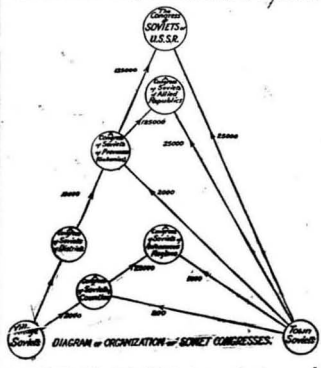
#### The Comintern

This is especially noticeable in relations between the point of view and policy of the Communist International and those of the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs. The Delegation had peculiar advantages for arriving at an appreciation of both; and for assessing the necessary difference, and even divergence, between the proselytising and propagandist policy of the Comintern and the practical realpolitik of the Commissariat. The function of the Comintern is to keep to the fore the internationalised creed of Communism and the crusade for revolution. The Commissariat is concerned with the renewal and maintenance of friendly relations with foreign Governments. The results seem to be reminiscent of the familiar friction between Foreign Missions and foreign missionaries. Indeed, just as Communism in one aspect can best be understood in its origin as a new Religious Order of devotion and discipline, so it may possibly be that the future of the Comintern is not so much as a publicity department of a political party as a preaching order. The emissaries of Lenin may have a future not unlike the missionaries of Loyola.

#### The Communist Party

It is in this direction that the present policy of the Communist Party appears to be tending. Under War Communism an effort was made to embody the whole electorate in the Communist Party. The New Economic Policy, however, made it obvious that if the principles of the Revolution were to be preserved the party must to a certain extent dissociate itself from concessions and compromises so as to preach, and as far as possible, practice pure doctrine. This led to the present conception of Russian Communism as a nucleus composed of stalwarts who survive a severe probation and periodic "purges." This nucleus vitalises a mass of non-partisans; who apparently contentedly accept the status of a line regiment from which the best men are continually being drafted into the Communist guard. The non-partisan is, however, now given a fairer chance of election, and even of official employment, outside the highest and innermost circles. He predominates sometimes, as the diagrams show, in the lower strata of the political structure and penetrates individually to all but the highest. He is aided in this by the readiness of the Communist rulers to employ Communists who may be of practical use regardless of politics. If a "White" general, who was Wrangel's Chief of Staff and was notorious for wholesale executions of Communists, is now controlling the General Staff, ex-Social Revolutionaries and Mensheviks who as non-partisans hold posts under the Government need not renounce any ambitions. And the absence of Communists among non-Communists obvious in 1920 does not seem noticeable today.

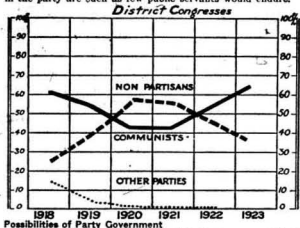
The Russian Communist conception of Communism as a "nucleus" or "cell" (yatcheika) not only expresses the present position of the party within the body politic, but also the policy of the party within the proletariat. The party no longer relies on





mere accretion. It works by leaving the lump through a "nucleus" in every factory and, theoretically, in every village; though in villages the Communist "centre" is often non-existent or dormant.

The party is made up to about half of industrial workers, the other half being divided between employes and peasants, rather more of the former than the latter, and with the latter yearly decreasing. Admission to membership and retention of it are now a matter of prayer and fasting. Protestants and peasants must pass a probation of six months as candidates and be vouched for by two members. Others must remain candidates for two years and get six guarantors. Members are tested every year or so by oral examination, about 10 per cent. being eliminated. Any anti-Communist action entails expulsion, such as a religious marriage, circumcision as a religious ceremony, and so forth. The Communist Party now prides itself on the annual reduction of its membership as much as it previously did on its increase under War Communism. The total membership rose from 23.6 thousand in 1917, 115.5 in 1918, 280.5 in 1919, 431.4 in 1920 to 585.6 in 1921. Since then it has fallen to 401.5 in 1922, 373 in 1923, and 350 thousand in 1924. Anyone who has seen a Communist after being under viva-voce for several hours in his annual examination will find him in a state of exhaustion and anxiety such as few Civil Service candidates experience. The devotion and discipline exacted from him while in the party are such as few public servants would endure.



Such an organisation might enable the governmental system to retain its vitality without the usual stimulus of an official opposition. For all opposition is as yet silenced. But the need of it is not so much felt owing to the extraordinary candour and criticism of those conducting affairs, and their readiness to conform their policy to new requirements of the moment. The constant elections and discussions at congresses keep those in power in touch with opinion; while the continuous stream of official publications and pronouncements keeps opinion informed of any defects that may develop in the system and of the proposals for reform. In fact, the critical functions of an opposition both in the Press and on the platform are largely performed by the Government itself. The speeches of political leaders are generally critical lectures on economics, not the appeals to passion and partisanship that are found necessary elsewhere.

It is conceivable even to those whose political experience is entirely based on a party system of Progressives and Conservatives, that a Government might keep itself alive and active on these lines. But it is, perhaps, more probable that Russian Communism will again compromise with conventional politics by developing a two-party system and a constitutional opposition. So long as Lenin is alive his ability and authority were sufficient to force upon what may be called conservative Communism such necessary concessions as the 'New Economic Policy'. But there is no personality big enough to fill the functions of an opposition party and compel a conservative clique to meet the requirements of the matter and the moment. Up to 1920 there still survived the relics of a recognised opposition in the Mensheviks and a section of the Social Revolutionaries. But this opposition was made illegal during the height of War Communism. And there is now no prospect of an opposition developing from a readmission of Mensheviks and S. R.'s to constitutional co-operation. The rank and file of these parties have, one way or another, joined the majority, and the leadership on the left in exile or in prison are too embittered to be of any future use. Organised opposition must under present conditions come from within the Communist Party itself.

#### The Growth of an Opposition

The party is quite aware of this possibility. Up to now its policy has been to maintain unity at all costs. In this it has so far been successful. Thus at the Seventh Party Congress there was an opposition of over one-fourth in the respect of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, in the Tenth Congress of 1921 there was an opposition of one-eighth in the controversy as to the future of Trade Unionism. At the Thirteenth Congress there was no declared opposition at all, which desired result was reached by previously reducing the ranks of the party by one-third.

But the present controversy between Trotsky and the Communist Old Guard suggests that an official opposition may be in process of formation within the party. Trotsky, who only joined the party just in time to take a prominent part in the October Revolution, represents liberal non-conformity as against die-hard communism. He represents the point of view of the more intellectual and independent non-partisan elements

and also of the younger and more progressive members of the party. So far the points on which he has come into collision with the conservatives are only significant to those well acquainted with Russian political conditions, and his position on such issues seems generally to have been unshared. But it would appear that we have in his Independent Initiative the embryo of an opposition whose business it would be to oppose and to get power by any constitutional means.

No immediate development of this sort is, however, to be expected. The whole Press is against this movement, there is no popular issue at present involved, and the appeal to maintain party unity will for some time be strong to be resisted. Trotsky has been ordered by the party to resign his government office, has loyally accepted the decision, and the incipient rift in the party has been closed. But good Communists, not followers of Trotsky, are prepared to admit in confidential conversation that this closing of all independent and interesting has been a mistake. They also are prepared to admit that there is a tendency of the Communists in control to become conservative, and that some provision must be made to represent more progressive points of view. It seems probable that if the Communist organisation is to remain the driving and directing power of the State it will have to divide between a conservative point of view that is practically reactionary and an alternative regime of War Communism and a progressive policy that will be radical in its search for new solutions and new settlements. **Amnesty and Political Prisoners**

The Delegation, concerned as it was with restoring friendly relations between the British and Russian peoples, lost no opportunity of putting before those in authority the advantages that would accrue abroad to the present regime from a generous amnesty. It found an appreciation of its arguments, but an apprehension lest such clemency might lead to further bloodshed. It was given an opportunity of a free conversation with the most dangerous opponents of the present Government now in prison—the Social Revolutionary leaders condemned to death two years ago and since then confined in Butyrka. The conversation was held with the prisoners in a 'body in the corridor' on to which their rooms opened, and not within the hearing of any Government official. It was evident from it that the prisoners would reject release on any condition restricting their future liberty of action. Also that the present conditions of their confinement were (in consequence, they said, of a hunger strike) as good as those of first-class misdemeanants in England. One of them who had experience of Tsarist prisons prided himself on the superiority of the Socialist Butyrka. In fact, the only alleviations of their lot they could suggest was permission to get foreign Labour papers, they would at present restricted conditions in removing. But the Delegation did not feel, in the circumstances, that it could take the serious responsibility of pressing for the release of such irreconcilables. It is, however, still of opinion that even with these men and women, clever and courageous though they are, as they are, and with their following in Russia and without a practical programme, their exile would be less prejudicial to the present Government than their further confinement; and that clemency would be even more wise in less important cases.

The Delegation came to Russia fully informed as to the reports in circulation concerning conditions among political prisoners confined in the old Solovetsky Monastery in the White Sea. It was a suggestion that the Delegation should send a deputation there met with no opposition; but it was found to be a season at which the island was inaccessible. All recent correspondence from the prisoners was offered for inspection, and should a Labour Delegation wish to undertake next spring the long journey thither every facility will be given it. The Delegation cannot therefore express any opinion as to the truth or falsity of reports and rumours it has been unable itself to investigate. But it took every opportunity that offered of pointing out the disadvantages of imprisoning political offenders in places that give colour to such reports.

#### 'Reign of Terror'

As to the persistent assertions in the Press that the present regime in Russia is a "reign of terror," the Delegation would wish to put on record its conviction that this could not be honestly believed by any unprejudiced person travelling within the Union and talking to its citizens. A government established by armed revolution and calling itself a "dictatorship" will be suspect of having no sanction by force long after this has ceased to be the case. And there is certainly often reluctance to resist either men or measures put forward by Communists that is inspired more by apprehension than affection. But it is hoped that this and the following chapters will at least suggest that a regime as therein described could not possibly be based on a "reign of terror."

#### General Conclusion

Finally the Delegation is of the opinion that the Soviet system of representation and its scheme of constitutional and civil rights, so far from being undemocratic in the widest sense of the word, given in many respects to the individual a more real and reasonable opportunity of participation in public than does parliamentary government, and that the opportunity of such participation is still severely restricted. For the system which has yet been kept under close control by its originators with the tacit consent of an immense majority of their fellow electors. This consent can be accounted for partly by the energy and efficiency with which these leaders carried the country through one crisis after another, and partly by the fact that the pioneers of the Revolution. But this permanence in power is the result of past circumstances, not of the present constitution. Under that constitution there are certain as great—and possibly greater—possibilities than elsewhere in respect of popular government, political peace, and social progress.

(Continued in next issue.)