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Fred E. Beal on stand; Judge Barnhill presiding. Gastonia,
N. C., 1929.

PROLETARIAN JOURNEY

NEW ENGLAND

GASTONIA

MOSCOW

FRED E. BEAL

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New York

get my bearings in this topsy-turvy scene. Why, even Roger Baldwin privately knew one truth about Russia and publicly professed another. I, too, was persuaded to withhold my criticism of Soviet Russia. "Do not give comfort to the enemy by telling the truth about Russia," was the maxim often employed by my comrades. With it went this set of arguments: "Just give them a chance! They are going to do marvelous things for the workers. One cannot make a revolution with silk gloves. One cannot build Socialism without sacrifices. What are the difficulties of today as compared with the glorious future of Communism?"

I finally yielded under the pressure of my comrades. Perhaps they were right, a voice within me said. I had gotten off on the wrong foot while in Soviet Russia. I would start all over again. I would go back and cooperate with the powers that be and do my bit in the construction of the new order. After an "underground" sojourn of six months in the United States, I slipped out of the country just as secretly as I had entered it, and in September, 1931, returned to the Soviet Union resolved "to be good" and make my peace with the Stalin régime.

XX. ON THE INSIDE

1

THE officials of the Communist International received me with open arms upon my arrival in Moscow. All the Gastonia fugitives were now in the Soviet Union, with the exception of "Bill" McGinnis. One of the boys, Clarence Miller, was making a career for himself in the Soviet bureaucracy. Others, like Joe Harrison, were having a hard time of it. "Red" Hendricks, still sick, was not daunted by my return. He was determined to leave for the United States as soon as his health improved. "I'd rather die fighting in the American labor movement than die here in a Soviet hospital," he said to me. I promised "Red" that I would do everything in my power to help him in the event of his arrest in America.

The food situation in Russia had taken a decided turn for the worse during my nine months' absence. But I still had some American dollars and I patronized the Torgsin stores. What an extraordinary institution was the Torgsin! It developed out of the shipment of food packages from abroad to relatives and foreigners in Russia. The appeals of the latter to individuals in America and elsewhere started a stream of food parcels to the Soviet Union. The Soviet Government quickly saw in this trade an opportunity to obtain the much needed foreign currency, and monopolized the commerce. It gradually developed into a nation-wide chain where the recipients of orders from abroad as well as Russians owning gold or foreign currency obtained food

supplies. The vast majority of the population could only pass the Torgsin stores and look hungrily into their windows. For the Soviet currency was not valid in these shops. Fortunate were those who had generous kinsfolk in America, the land which according to the reports in the Soviet press at the time was in the throes of hunger and on the verge of collapse.

There was one American in Moscow who did not take stock in these Communist reports, an aged Negro woman, known to everybody as Aunt Emma. She had come to Russia with a troupe of colored actors before the Revolution, and played for the Tsar and imperial family. She had lost her passport and was stranded in Russia during the Revolution. Emma learned Russian. For a while she worked in a Soviet textile factory. Later she became a cook for Americans. And still later she held the job of clerk in a Torgsin store. The Americans loved her. She always wanted to get back to the United States. Many had tried to arrange for her return before American recognition of the Soviet Government, but without success. Emma liked to be called "Mammy," much to the discomfiture of the American Communists in Moscow. But her apple pies atoned for her "bourgeois" manners. She gave a party in my honor and made a few dozen pies for the guests. The flour and the apples came from the Torgsin. Many an American firebrand extinguished his revolutionary ardor in feasting on Emma's apple pie. In 1934, Emma was enabled by the American Embassy in Moscow to go back to the United States.

2

Aside from American Communists and sympathizers, all kinds of driftwood from the United States floated

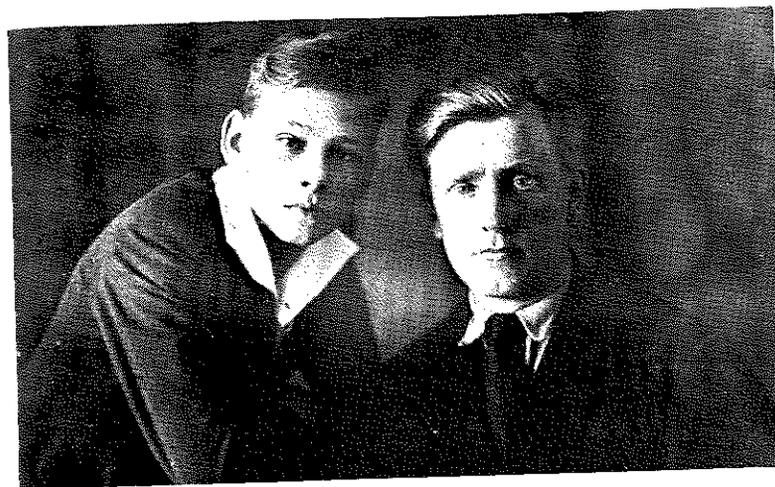
into the Soviet Union. Why not? People in this country were reading the most flamboyant articles about the Communist Utopia. Communist orators declared that it was "the workers' paradise." And those who believed what they read and heard contrasted it with the capitalist depression and decided to seek the new and better life across the seas. They came with every intention of settling into the pattern of communist existence; they found that it was an existence without pattern and yet without freedom, either. One of the victims of this confusion was William Gedritis, a lad of sixteen, who had been sent by his communist parents from Chicago "to help build Socialism." Bill knew nothing about Socialism but, like any American boy, was enthusiastic about the trip. Moscow was not so enthusiastic about Bill's arrival. The American leaders there were in a quandary as to what to do with him. They dared not send him back because he had received a handsome farewell reception in Chicago at which much reckless propaganda had been issued about the opportunities of Soviet Russia; and they feared to keep him because Bill had already begun to organize the American youth on hand into a group which was extremely embarrassing to the Communists. In fact, they called Bill, "king of the bandits," a description which owed more to the boy's origin in Chicago than to the activities of the "bandit gang." They were just a group of healthy American kids, full of mischief, but to Russian Communists American horseplay is "hooliganism," a word which has terrible implications there.

The editor of the *Moscow News* was very anxious to rid the city of its All-American problem, Bill Gedritis, and I was asked to take him with me to Kharkov where I had just been assigned to take charge of the political

propaganda among the foreign workers in the newly opened Tractor Plant. I took him along and the lad remained with me for two years and finally helped me to get out of Russia. But for his assistance I should never have reached Paris.

A curious misfit who finally did establish himself was Tony Sponza. He arrived in Moscow shortly before my departure for Kharkov as a deportee from the United States. Sponza was a prize-fighter who had been arrested in America for rioting with Italian Fascists when the latter were on parade. He was not a Communist and knew nothing about the aims of the Party. His fight with the Fascists was strictly personal. The immigration authorities decided to deport him to Italy. The Communist International Labor Defense took up his case and fought it in the courts to change the deportation order so as to give him the privilege of going to Soviet Russia. Now Tony, though completely ignorant of Soviet Russia, thought it would be better than Italy. The American Communist Party gained prestige by defending his case. So that every one was happy when it was finally decided to deport Sponza to the workers' republic.

I met Tony when he arrived in Moscow. He had already spent two weeks in Leningrad. This was enough for him. The adventure was over. Now he wanted to go back to America. Day after day he made trips to the MOPR begging to be sent back to the country that had thrown him out. He hadn't the slightest idea what was meant by the class struggle. The MOPR tried to put him to work, but he refused. Being a boxer he tried to induce the Russians to let him put on an exhibition bout in Moscow. But they threw up their hands in horror at this bourgeois suggestion. Besides, there probably was



William Gedritis and Fred E. Beal, Kharkov, Ukraine, U.S.S.R., 1932.



American Section, Red Front (Osoaviachim), Fred E. Beal, leader, 1932.

not a pair of boxing gloves in all Russia. Failing to get up a fight, Tony lived off American tourists and hung around the hotels and restaurants to beg from foreigners. The MOPR gave him more rubles and warned him to keep away from the tourists. He was, indeed, in a pitiable condition. He pleaded with me to write to some sympathetic persons in America to secure for him permission to return to the United States. I gave him a ray of hope when I wrote to find a way for Tony's return on the ground that he had a wife who was about to have a child. He sat beside me, biting his finger-nails, while I typed the letter to Roger Baldwin. Tony's wife in America was a young Jewish girl. She had left him when he was arrested.

"Is she really going to have a kid?" I asked, feeling that Tony would hatch any kind of a plot to get back.

"I don't know, but I'll write her to get one. She hasn't written me a letter for months." He then insisted how much he loved her and yearned to be in her arms again. "These Moscow broads are a dirty bunch, they never take a bath," he complained.

I mailed the letter to Roger Baldwin. Tony was to write his wife pleading to be forgiven and to ask her if she was going to have a child. If not, to get one some way—through an orphanage, if need be.

In due time I received a letter from Baldwin that nothing could be done. Tony despaired. He was afraid that if he refused again to go to work, he would certainly be sent to prison. The MOPR did give him notice—to get out of the Political Emigrants' House as his bed was wanted for another political refugee. Then Tony thought of the idea of getting a job on one of the Russian boats, with the intention of deserting in some

foreign country. "I'll go back to Italy," he exclaimed, "and take a chance on getting caught by Mussolini!"

But to his dismay he was told that only those who had worked five years on inland boats could travel to foreign lands, and then only those who belonged to the Communist Party. So Tony started on a five-year plan of his own. He would work five years inland, then make his escape!

Nearly two years later, on our way out of Soviet Russia, Bill Gedritis and I met Tony again in Odessa. He was surprised to see us. He had a good job. He boasted of it. It was cleaning up the prostitutes in Odessa. As long as he could hold this job, he was satisfied with Soviet life. He was a Communist now. And Communists had an easier life, he confided.

"How do you do it, Tony?" I asked.

"I bring her to my room and put her through a test. After it's over, I put her under arrest. I've rounded up plenty, and the best of it is, I get twenty rubles a head."

3

Kharkov was then the capital of the Ukrainian Soviet Republic. There was a colony of several hundred foreign workers and specialists, mostly Americans, Germans, and Czechoslovaks at the tractor plant. I was to be in charge of propaganda and cultural relations, and serve as the contact man between the Soviet authorities and the foreigners. My chief in this work was Isadore Erenburg, a Los Angeles Communist, a native of the Ukraine. The instructions that I carried specified my duties as follows: to supervise the food supply and the housing conditions of the foreigners and take measures to satisfy their complaints; to organize political classes,

excursions and cultural entertainments. Before leaving Moscow, my instructions were amplified at the Communist International by Clarence Hathaway, at the time Moscow representative of the American Communist Party and later editor of the *Daily Worker* in New York. Comrade Hathaway explained my duties to me in the following fashion: "Do not yield to the materialistic desires of the foreigners, but cajole them and try to make them happy with as little as possible in the way of food and other requirements." He made it clear that the idea was to get the most out of the foreigners in the way of showing the Russians how to produce tractors without giving way to their individualistic tendencies and loose political notions.

Upon my arrival in Kharkov, I realized how important my position was. I was thrown into contact with the highest Soviet officials, such as Petrovsky, the President of the Ukrainian Soviet Republic; with Skrypnik, Vice-president of the Council of People's Commissars and member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union; with the all-powerful Postichev, who had been sent down by Stalin from Moscow to weed out the rebels in the Ukrainian Communist Party; and with the leading officials of the G.P.U.

My first thought upon assuming office, based upon many years' experience as a union leader, was to *organize* the foreigners at the Kharkov Tractor Plant into one group in order to increase their efficiency. All the foreigners received much higher wages than the Russians. Many were paid in *valuta*—in foreign currency. I wanted the Soviet Government to get its money's worth out of the foreigners. My first act was to call a meeting of the most active foreigners, who were either Communists or Communist sympathizers. The meeting

was a huge success, if judged by the number of complaints received about living conditions and the food service. The Soviet officials were angered by my calling the meeting. I had done it in my naïveté without their knowledge and they had no representative present. I discovered shortly afterwards that only an American with such a record as mine could have gotten away with such an unheard-of step—daring to hold a meeting at which no agent of the Stalin dictatorship was present.

The chief of the G.P.U. in Kharkov, Comrade Potapenko, invited me to call on him. He told me not to organize the foreigners, because those inclined toward Fascism might take up political matters. I replied that having been entrusted with a job by the Soviet Government, I could be trusted to do that job in the best way to meet the needs of the situation. Potapenko made it unmistakably clear to me that the only meetings I was to call were those in connection with factory work, and added: "And then *only* when told to do so by the Communist Party leaders. A party representative must *always* be present at such meetings."

"Why couldn't the foreign workers organize into groups and make known their feelings in matters concerning their own welfare, even on political issues?" I blew up in reply to Potapenko. "The majority of the foreigners consists of Communists or Communist sympathizers."

"Ah," the chief of the G.P.U. spoke up significantly, "now you'd better forget your American bourgeois-democratic ideas! You are now under the dictatorship of the proletariat!"

The irony of the situation was beyond words. I could almost see cartoons in the capitalist press in America depicting that interview, in which a soviet bureaucrat

was upbraiding Fred E. Beal, Red Gastonia fugitive, for his bourgeois ideas.

"Of course," I mumbled in answer, "I know that this is the dictatorship of the proletariat. But I had supposed that workers enjoyed democratic rights within the framework of the Bolshevik system."

I learned my lesson. It was obviously my mistake. The workers' democracy which I had believed to exist in Russia was to be found only on the forgotten paper known as the Soviet Constitution and in the bristling columns of the Communist newspapers abroad. In reality, the Soviet régime was a dictatorship *over* the proletariat!

4

The several hundred foreign workers at the Kharkov Tractor Plant formed a privileged upper class, divided by a chasm from the ten thousand Russian workers employed there. The standard of living of these foreigners was the envy of the great mass of Russians. What was this standard of living?

After the G.P.U. had told me not to organize the foreign colony, my job settled down into a continuous effort to keep the foreigners from rebelling against their living conditions. It was not an altogether successful job, as the reader will see. I visited each family individually, according to the class to which the foreigners belonged, whether specialists or common workers. They overwhelmed me with complaints. I took notes and handed in a lengthy report to the factory administration. Here are some random items from the copy of that report in my possession.

House V-2, Room 46. This comrade gets no wood. He and his family have to run around stealing it wher-

ever they can find it. There is insufficient food at the foreign store. No eggs, flour, onions or other vegetables. He finds the working hours too long. They are supposed to be eight, but actually he is asked and forced to work from twelve to fourteen hours each day. He does not get his pay regularly and keeps borrowing from his friends. Because of the late working hours, he and his friends are unable to get together and organize any kind of social life. He finds life after work very monotonous and his friends complain about this also. He would like to have a change of bread now and then. (Some white bread.) This comrade had been a party member in the United States for years.

House V-2, Room 10, third floor, 1st entrance (eight Americans). These eight Americans find it hard to get their wages. They find their wages of one hundred rubles a month totally insufficient. Some of them are unable to go to work because of being hungry. They complain of not getting enough wood and coal. They have to steal wood to cook their meals with. The laundry is too expensive, costing one and a half rubles for the washing of a union-suit and seventy-five kopeks for shirts and they have to furnish the soap. Their room is unheated.

House V-2, Room 34. Cannot get things they want at the store. The father of the family would like to be paid for straight time instead of on a piece-work basis. On piece-work, he has to sacrifice quality if he wants to make enough money for a bare living. Has the same complaints as above.

House G-1, Room 33. This comrade has been in the Soviet Union for six months. The house is poorly managed and the manager supplies wood and coal only to those who can afford to give him cigarettes. He has to forage around for wood. The lights in the hall are off at

night and on in the daytime. He cannot get eggs and vegetables.

House G-31, Room 31. This comrade says the meetings are too long. The razors in the barber shop are dull, the bread at the store is stale.

House V-2, Room 91. (German, wife and two children.) This comrade has only one room for his family. He wants two. He wants coal. He is freezing. He cannot buy clothes and shoes at the store for his children. They want springs on their beds instead of the boards they now sleep on. They would like a wardrobe to put their clothes in.

There were numerous other complaints of this nature. Then came the revolt. One day the women of the foreign colony, mostly Germans, went on a Hunger March to the office of the Kharkov Tractor Plant. That is just what it was called by themselves and by the whole foreign colony. What a surprise to the meek starving Russians! The women demanded from the dictators something to eat. They were starving. Their men brought nothing to eat when they came home from work. They were always cold from lack of wood and coal. They marched right down to the factory and demanded to see the officials. The officials called out Erenburg and me to try to calm them. We spoke to them. We spoke about starvation in Germany and America, about the complete breakdown of capitalism and about unemployment. This had some effect. Then Ronin, our local Communist leader, attacked them full blast, scolding them for daring to march on the factory.

In the meantime, Erenburg and I drew up a resolution for them to endorse. The resolution, typical of what we had to put out in such cases, proclaimed to the world the wonders of Socialist construction, the solving of un-

employment and the fight against the kulaks and the wreckers, agents of imperialist powers trying to sabotage the Workers' Revolution! We threw in a few cheers for our leader Stalin and condemned the complainants as Fascists. What excellent and manifold uses the word Fascist has been put to!

The foreign correspondents in Moscow never got hold of this sort of news. If they did, they could not send it out to their papers. Moscow would expel them. If a piece of news like this hunger march had got out to the capitalist press, Moscow would have sent down a few of the special G.P.U. men and it would have been all over with such small fry as Ronin. All the difficulties would have been attributed to his mismanagement or, worse still, to sabotage.

The hunger marchers went back to their homes, feeling for the moment they had grossly overestimated their longing for food. But their stomachs could not forget! The women became more angry and threatening. It was not easy for the families to break their contracts and go home immediately, although some did this. But they did write stormy letters to relatives in Germany telling how rotten Stalin-land was. Coming from Communist women, the letters were read in German radical clubs and printed in German newspapers. This called forth another round of resolutions from Kharkov stating the letters were forgeries or sent by some isolated Fascist!

Incidentally, this is one of the answers to the question as to why Hitler rose to power. The German workers, who were closer to Soviet Russia than the people of other countries, saw through the chicanery of Stalinism and lost faith in the Soviet system.

XXI. LABOR UNDER THE HAMMER AND SICKLE

1

THE large colony of privileged foreign workers at the Kharkov Tractor Plant subsisted on a starvation diet. How then shall I adequately describe the condition of the Russian workers? Did the Russian workers have the barest necessities of life? Did they have warm clothes? Were the barracks in which they were quartered warm? Was the factory heated? Were they happy and free, as the Stalinist propagandists abroad tell us? Could the Russian workers leave their jobs and go to look for a better place? Could they go on strike to improve their conditions? Could they protest in any way against injustices?

To begin with, there was a restaurant at the factory for the great mass of unskilled labor, the so-called "black workers." This is what they were served for the noon-day meal: a bowl of cabbage soup with a herring bone or two swimming in it, one slice of bread, and a few ounces of barley gruel. That was all. The common workers received no meat, except on special occasions, such as Soviet celebrations or the arrival of foreign tourists. The workers ate in shifts. Many times, those in the last shift got nothing at all. The food ration allowed for the rest of the day consisted of a ticket entitling one to a pound-and-a-half of black bread priced at twenty-five kopecks. When the bread supply ran out, as it did every day or so, the worker was compelled to buy in the open

market at the price of three rubles or more for the same quantity. Butter, cheese, eggs, milk were almost never obtained. These were even difficult for the specialists to secure.

In the filthy barracks, in which the common workers lived, heat was sometimes obtainable. In our factory—never! During the long, cold winters, the interior of the plant was an iceberg, little warmer than outside. Every one wore a coat if he had one and jumped up and down and clapped his hands together to keep the blood circulating. Thus were the workers supposed to engage successfully in the complicated work of producing good workable tractors. The sanitary conditions are impossible of description. Toilets were horrible. Water pipes froze often in the winter and the men would be without running water for days at a time. An allowance of one cake of soap a month was made to a worker. It would disappear in one washing. It was that kind of soap. There was a terrible lack of clothes of any sort. If one was an *udarnik*—shock troop worker—he might with great effort secure a pair of shoes or a coat. The common worker got nothing. Every man and woman in the plant was surrounded by stool-pigeons, members of the G.P.U. and other secret agents. They would turn the worker in for the slightest grumbling against his lot, not to speak of an attempt to organize any resistance to it. Sometimes members of the Communist Party and even the privileged *udarnik* would act as spies upon the common worker, inform upon him and turn in even supposedly good friends either by reason of fear or in the hope of advancement and getting favors from the authorities. The only weapon the common Soviet worker has in his agonizing efforts to throw off the shackles of his masters is the weapon of *silent sabotage*.

The fear of getting shot or of starvation in exile threatens any one who resorts to this means of protest. So inexorable is the terror that a strike among the Russian workers or a hunger march is almost inconceivable. Yet so extreme was the despair that all over Russia the workers were engaged in a great spontaneous campaign of silent sabotage.

The shock troopers at the Kharkov Tractor Plant were inspired or coerced by the Communist Party leaders to slave day and night, often in freezing weather, for the “workers’ government.” When these *udarniks* did an enormous amount of work and exceeded the piece-work quota, which was already high enough, then they received as a reward somewhat better living conditions and a little more food. Poems and songs have been written about these shock brigadiers. Undoubtedly some of them were moved to make sacrifices by their ideals and hopes for the future. Most of the shock workers were simply stool-pigeons, however, who delivered their less fortunate and more exhausted fellow-workers to the terrorist authorities. In the factory restaurant, they were the first to be waited upon and, once in a while, they were allowed to buy a few small cookies and cakes. They were sometimes given free tickets to the “entertainments” where more propaganda was offered up to them. Some were given a chance to live in the apartments where foreigners and party officials lived, but these chances came few and far between even for the *udarnik*. There is a class division between the shock troopers and the so-called “black workers.” The latter who formed the preponderant majority stayed away from the *udarniks* and preferred to pour out their bitter hearts to the foreigners without fear of being betrayed to the Communist functionaries.

I visited other cities and factories in the Soviet Union. With the exception of the cities of Moscow and Leningrad, where conditions were somewhat better, I never saw any Russian workers whose average life was easier than that of the mass at the Kharkov Tractor Plant. I did see worse conditions. Beneath the privileged classes of the soldiers of the Red Army, of the officers of the G.P.U., of the specialists in charge of technical departments, of the higher Communist bureaucrats, and of the select *udarniks*, the vast class of the Russian workers was in a state of serfdom which defies exact definition.

The Kharkov Tractor Plant was one of the most important Soviet undertakings and conditions there were supposed to be among the best in Russia. Yet factory life in this exemplary establishment was far and away worse than anything I had ever seen in America. Piece-work was universal in production. Quotas were high and workers had to put in inordinately long hours to make even their minimum. If they failed to make this a few times, they were fired as quickly as in any capitalist plant. They had no recourse to law in such cases. I remember one fellow in the foundry who, weak and emaciated, asked his foreman for a leave of absence for the purpose of resting and trying to get a little food in the open market to rebuild his energies. The leave was refused. The next day this man walked out of the foundry door to get a breath of fresh air and dropped on the ground from weakness. They took him away and, later, I asked one of the foremen what had become of him. He shrugged his shoulders and would not answer. I knew that the hospital services were reserved for specialists, Communist Party members and sometimes *udarniks*, if

the latter had enough "pull." The foundry worker had probably been taken to his bunk in the barracks where he had died, which was a usual occurrence.

Workers tried heroically to keep up the fight. One mistake, one let-up and their places would be taken by others; they would be "removed" or sent out into the open without a food ticket, without shelter or without a job. If by chance a worker lost his passport, he would absolutely be without a place in the economic structure of the country. Poor as his job might be, it was the only path to stave off complete starvation.

At the Kharkov Tractor Plant, the foreigners were in despair at having to work alongside starving, stupefied and dazed Russian workers. Not only was it extremely depressing to the spirits to see the emaciated condition of the men, but they could get little coöperation from them in that state. One American, working in the machine shop on production, delivered a speech at the noon hour: "This food is not fit for pigs," he said. "I learned in the labor movement in America that those who do not work shall not eat, and it seems to me about time that those who do work shall eat!" This man was out of the Soviet Union in two weeks, branded by the American Communist Party as a "Social-Fascist."

The American specialist, Tom Stewart, demanded from the plant director, Swistoon, that foundry workers be given at least a pint of milk in the foundry every day. He threatened to quit the job and go home if the order was not carried out. The order was carried out. How the factory workers loved Tom Stewart!

The factory minimum wage was sixty rubles a month. The unskilled workers received this much. Others received up to one hundred and fifty rubles, and, in the case of Russian specialists, two hundred and fifty to

three hundred, according to the quota set for them. Some food was obtainable on the food ticket, but suppose a factory worker wanted to go to Kharkov and get a square meal? I have before me a typical menu of one such meal I had at the time with a companion: two soups, two beef-steaks (stringy meat), two pieces of bread . . . fifty-nine rubles. This, to a wandering tourist, would mean twenty-eight dollars, according to the legal exchange, and a month's wages to a common Russian worker. And that was by no means a high-priced meal in comparison with others I had.

Communists in America fought against piece-work. It was our stock demand: *Abolition of piece-work!* In many of the capitalist factories production men have found they could get a better grade of work and more of it if they left it to the man to work on his own initiative. In Russia, however, piece-work is one of Stalin's main levers of production. Every department of the Kharkov Tractor Plant was on piece-work. They do not trust the workers on straight time. And the speed-up! Another one of our stock demands in America was: *Abolition of the speed-up!* But in our plant efficiency men from the Soviet Tractor Trust worked day and night figuring out how to speed up the workers, how to make the belt move faster.

Communists in Detroit rave against the monotonous life-sucking belt system operating at the Ford plant. Had I not done so myself in Pontiac, Michigan? But I never heard a word uttered against its use in Soviet Russia. The belt system is in the assembling department. It is here that the tractor or automobile comes to life, beginning with the placing of the chassis on the moving platform. The assembly line (belt) moves on, workmen on each side slip in the various parts needed in

building the machine. Finally—the line moving all the time—all the parts are fitted and the finished car moves off the conveyor. The trouble with the Kharkov Tractor Plant was that the belt or conveyor never moved fast enough for the Communist bosses.

The Stalinists justify piece-work and the speed-up by saying it is for the greater cause of Socialism. Every hardship, every iniquity and every injustice was being perpetrated in the holy name of the Revolution and the Classless Society! At the same time the Stalin policy created more classes among the Russian workers than under capitalism and suppressed with a mailed fist every true radical and revolutionary manifestation on the part of the masses.

3

There is no unemployment in Soviet Russia—is the familiar line of the Communists in America and other foreign lands. What are the facts? At the Kharkov Tractor Plant there was not a day that I did not see large groups of people waiting outside of the gates looking for work. When a man was taken on, he had to go through a great deal of investigation. The applicant had to answer where he worked before and why he left his job. Were his parents workers or dirt farmers? Had they come from "kulak" stock? Had the applicant left a collective farm of his own free will? Many hungry wanderers looked for work at the plant. Most of them were turned away, particularly those who came from collectives. I remember one old man, ragged and freezing, begging for a job. Being hungry he was ready to do anything. He pestered the young official who did the hiring. "Go away, old man," said our young Communist bureaucrat, "go to the field and die!"

As the old man silently and quiveringly turned away and walked down the ice-covered road, the young man's eyes followed him with contempt. "It's time we put these old people out of the way," he remarked.

The Tractor Plant, one of the glories of the "workers' fatherland," is surrounded by a high brick wall. Every entrance is guarded by a soldier with loaded rifle and fixed bayonet. In addition there are watchmen at the entrances to the factory grounds. To get in one must show a pass. Every person entering the plant, including all the workers, must have a pass with the bearer's photograph on it, stamped and signed by the chiefs of the factory G.P.U. Only guided tourists are excepted from this rule. A worker has a hard time getting to his job if, by accident, he leaves his pass at home, or, what is much worse, if he loses it. In the latter case, he has to be hired all over again. I have seen men, old plant workers, pleading with the guard for a chance to get to their jobs, panicky lest they lose their food allowance for that day. Every few months, the administration changes the type of pass and every worker and employee must get a new identification card. This unusual passport system was devised to enchain the workers and restrict them to certain zones. On the whole, it has accomplished the purpose of forcing the men to stay on their jobs regardless of working conditions. Thus, a worker in Kharkov having a passport good only for that zone, could not get a job if he moved, for instance, to Rostov or Stalingrad.

We had a school attached to the plant in which "engineers" were turned out by the dozen. These engineers, supposedly picked for unusual ability or political loyalty, would be rushed through the courses and let loose upon the factory as highly qualified men. They would attempt at once to correct the work of the foreign spe-

cialists, bringing untold confusion and wrecking the activities of the really able technicians. Fine and expensive machinery was ruined because of the total incompetence of these novices who had been put in positions of authority. Production was hampered time and again. Parts made of inferior metal would quickly wear out. Makeshift belts would quickly go to pieces. Measurements would be wrong. The average tractor sent out from the plant had a very short life. There were spasms when production slowed down to practically nothing. The same system prevailed in other great plants all over the country. But on paper the results somehow looked impressive. The industrialization of the Soviet Union appeared to be going ahead by leaps and bounds, and helped to disguise the appalling starvation and enslavement of the great masses.

4

Wherever I went in the Ukraine, I saw thousands of homeless outcasts about the streets with great watery blisters on their feet and ankles resulting from diseases of malnutrition. I would see them sit down on the ground and prick these blisters to let out water and then get up and drag themselves about their begging. Of course, they stole anything they could lay their hands on and the factories, whose workers had planted vegetable gardens and cabbage patches to supplement their own slim rations, would be compelled to post guards with orders to shoot to kill these pitiable foragers. In some instances they waylaid, robbed and killed some better-faring compatriot in the dark, but they were usually deterred from this sort of thing by the thought of some awful retaliation of the G.P.U. I saw this state of

things in Kharkov. I saw it in Odessa, Kiev and other cities. The condition existed all over the southern part of the U.S.S.R. All these people were called "kulaks," and the government slogan was: "Liquidate the kulak!" They were not allowed to have passports. They were not allowed to ride trains. They were not allowed to have jobs in the factories because the factory authorities could not feed them, although the official reason was that "they might wreck the machinery." The Soviet Government had further given orders that no one might feed these runaway peasants. Such is the spell of fanatical propaganda coupled with unparalleled terror that the workers in the cities, themselves living on the lowest of rations and under nigh unbearable living conditions, would often denounce these peasants to the G.P.U. But they continued to run away from the collectives by the millions. They robbed freight trains. They plundered cooperative stores for food. The Central Committee of the Communist Party issued orders and decrees, threatening these "anti-social" elements with "the highest measure of social defense"—capital punishment.

The starving peasants and workers stormed the foreign colony at the Kharkov Tractor Plant every day. With piteous cries for food, they went from house to house and from door to door whenever they could get past the guards stationed there. It was the only hope of getting bread. There was none on the land. The Stalin clique was determined, however, to teach the famine-stricken people "a lesson in Communist dictatorship." These crowds of roving peasants were augmented by discharged workers from factories, workers who couldn't keep up with the Stalin pace or who had grumbled, protested, or fallen into disfavor with their overseers. For a worker to get fired in Soviet Russia means death by starvation, unless he can learn the art of beg-

ging or is fortunate enough to have some kind relative in the capitalist countries. For when a worker is fired, he loses his work-card. And when he loses his work-card, he loses his bread-card and the right to live in the government-owned houses or barracks. The discharged worker cannot depend on help from friends who have barely enough food for their own existence. Besides, the G.P.U. "discourages" any aid to such victims. And when the G.P.U. "discourages," it means a threat to life or freedom. So the Tractor Plant and our foreign colony there was besieged by droves of begging and pleading people, seeking a few crumbs of bread, some potato peelings, or some fish bones. Not a day passed without groups of these disinherited peasants and workers, young and old, men and women, knocking at our doors. They would dig into the garbage boxes and fight like packs of wild dogs for food remains.

The Stalin clique positively hated these intruders, especially the peasants. The hungry folks stood in the way of the bureaucrats anxious to make a good showing before the visiting delegations and tourists. Indeed, of what use was the propaganda put out in America, claiming that the Soviet worker was prosperous and always employed, if these hungry, shelterless, jobless "beggars" were permitted to expose the truth? The Soviet authorities, with the aid of the Communist Party members of the factory, who were eager to win favors from the high officials, would round up the starving people in the streets, collect them in great herds, and turn them over to the G.P.U. I saw it happen many times. It was a weekly occurrence. Sometimes a raid would be improvised a few hours before the arrival of a foreign delegation. I confess that I even took part to some extent in these inhuman dragnets.

XXII. FAMINE

I

THE Stalin dictatorship frowned on any attempts on the part of even foreign Communists to see what was going on in the country. When I organized an expedition at Kharkov for some members of the foreign colony to go out into the villages, the G.P.U. immediately quashed the idea. One fall day, in 1932, a Russian factory worker and I started on a long hike out into the countryside. We started early in the morning of our rest day and arrived back home very late at night. I will call my friend Maxim. I don't want to get him into trouble with his masters. The things we saw are not what the visitor to Russia sees. The tourists would see only the special farms. One of these is the G.P.U. Commune located in the Kharkov district. It is called the "Red Star." The peasants working on this farm are hand-picked members of the Communist Party and the Young Communist League. They are well-fed and housed. The cows are contented and the tractors, under the management of strapping young shock troopers, actually plow the fields. But 95 per cent of the collectives and state farms are radically different from this.

Maxim and I hiked south from our place, crossing the ravine in back of the tractor plant town where the beggars stewed up the fish bones and we passed the new laundry beyond, the new laundry which never seemed to be in running order!

After some miles of walking, we came upon two men

and a woman working in a field. We knew they were DOPR (prisoners' corps) workers, but we wanted them to tell us. At first the woman, whose uncovered legs were all broken out with boils and scabby places, started to run. One of the men called her back, saying that it was an "Inostranetz" (foreigner).

"Why did you run?" Maxim asked.

"I was afraid the police had come to shoot me," she answered.

"Why should they shoot you?"

"Because they took my husband and my son. They killed them, I'm sure, and now they want to kill me," the woman cried and became hysterical. With this she fell heaving to the ground, pounding and flaying it with her fists.

The man who had called her back explained her case to us. The father and son had been shipped to some unknown place for failure to make the quota. The quota is the tax in kind set by the Soviet Commissars. It had to be met—or else! This woman did not want to run away from this vicinity, because she hoped she might hear from her husband and son some day. The man told us the story of his own past. He was a cabinet maker. During the war, he was captured by the Germans and put to work at his trade. Considering conditions in Germany at the time, he was making a comfortable living. Then the Bolshevik Revolution broke out in Russia. As he was a Socialist he went back to his native land to help build Socialism. He fought in the Red Army against the White Armies and, after they were defeated, he became a member of the Communist Party. He followed the leadership of Lenin because Lenin had promised land to the peasants. He received a small bit of land and had worked hard and was beginning to prosper.

He owned a cow, a horse and a plow and always met his taxes until the Government began to make them impossible to meet. A year and a half before he was short four bushels of wheat and three of potatoes. They sentenced him to forced labor, one year for each bushel short of the required tax! Now he was a convict.

"There seems to be no one watching you, why don't you run away?" I asked.

"What for . . . where will I go? Here I get some bread every day and all the tomatoes I can steal. If I run away, I'll starve."

I thought of the Sokolnike Prison and that other show-place, Bolshevo, near Moscow, where the prisoners never ran away. And how the Bolsheviks boasted of it! How the tourists had marveled at the supposed model Soviet penal system!

"What else do you get to eat?" asked Maxim of the prisoner.

"Nothing . . . nothing else at all, other than a pound and a quarter of bread a day. If we walked eight miles we could get borsch (soup) with sun-flower seed oil on top. But we would rather steal tomatoes. Want one?" He took from his faded blouse three or four small tomatoes and offered them on the palm of his hand. We hesitated. "Please take one, it is all I can offer you."

We did and our cabinet maker and his two prison comrades looked happy. In return we gave them a box of matches. Even a measly box of matches made them happy! Now, they could boil the tomatoes and make a soup!

We went on and saw many others like these working the field in a dazed and feeble way. This was a State farm (Sovhoz) and the majority of the peasants were prisoners. All were in a bad condition, weak and under-

nourished. Miles further, we came to a collective farm. Here we met a woman with two buckets of water swinging on a stick over her shoulder. Nearby was a village of thatched houses. We asked the woman for some milk, offering to pay for it.

"We have no milk," she replied. "We haven't had any for six months."

"Isn't this a collective?" asked Maxim.

"Yes, this is a collective." And we couldn't get another word out of her.

We went on to the houses through a wide field of weeds and tomatoes. The weeds were higher than the tomatoes and absorbing all the nourishment from the ground. The tomatoes were sickly and small. A woman sat close by under the shade of a tree.

"Comrade, why don't some of you get out and pull the weeds? They are choking the tomatoes," I said.

"What for?" she answered us. "We had some nice tomatoes last year and the government came and took them all away from us. The same with the potatoes and everything else we raised. We had nothing to live on through the winter. Citizen, do you think I can pull all those weeds? There were two thousand of us here once. Now there are only about one hundred left, and God knows what will happen to the rest of us this winter!"

"And where are the rest?"

"They died or ran away. Now, there are only a few children and one sick cow."

My friend Maxim and I continued our journey through the Ukrainian countryside and wandered around a village on the way to the Stalin Commune

which was our destination. In the backyard garden of one of the thatched houses we found two boys of about fourteen. Here the vegetables looked healthy, compared with the sickly products of the fields. One of the boys was hale and strong, as if the earth had given him the best it had. The other looked starved and listless. We asked the healthy one:

"Is this your garden?"

"Yes, and my father's."

"Where is your father and the other people of this collective?"

"They are out stealing tomatoes!"

The straightforwardness of this answer amazed me. Maxim said it was because I was a foreigner. The lad had no fear of foreigners.

"Aren't your father and the other people afraid of being arrested for stealing tomatoes, and can't you get them from the collective?"

"We'll die if we don't get the tomatoes, and we can't get them from the collective. We have no flour or anything except what comes from these gardens. The government took all our food."

The listless boy said he came with his mother from a long way off, he didn't know where. His mother had died in a field near this collective and the father of the healthy one took him into his home. The starveling had some vague recollections of his father fighting soldiers. These children were raised since the Revolution. They know nothing about the old ways except what they have heard from the older folks.

"I like my own garden best," the healthy one ventured, pointing to it proudly.

We gave the lads a few lumps of sugar, a luxury in these parts, and went on in the direction of the Stalin

Commune, advertised as one of the highest Communist achievements. Mile after mile we walked through uncultivated ground. Maxim said it hadn't been cultivated for over two years. As far as the eye could see, the land was barren save for weeds. At other times, I saw similar vast stretches of idle ground. Yet at this very time the *Moscow News* was telling Americans that Ukraine was one hundred per cent cultivated! Near a brook, we came upon the decomposed body of a man. Flies, ants and worms were feeding on his remains. We had seen numerous fresh graves marked with crude Greek crosses pushed into the earth, and skeletons of horses and cows. But this was the first dead human being in the open we saw that day. Another hour's walk and we came to a wheat field, or I should say a weed and wheat field. Maxim pulled at the wheat and showed me a few undeveloped kernels. "The wheat is sick, the weeds are thriving." At last, we came upon two men plowing a field with a tractor. A real tractor it was and running, too. A young man, the driver, was cursing the older man for not being able to hold down the plow.

"You're not digging deep enough," said Maxim.

"It's the fault of this old bag of bones!" complained the young man.

The older one, who was doing his best to bear down on the plow, got somewhat excited. He must have thought we were government officials. "Citizens, I'm doing my best, but I don't know this thing!" he cried and pointed to the tractor. "If they would give me a 'sokha' (wooden plow), I'd show them."

We went on to a small group of houses, passing in the field an abandoned John Deere Combine of late model. It was rusted and out of order. A few more rains and it would probably be beyond repair. I wondered how

many thousands of bushels of grain were taken from the peasants to pay for it in American dollars. The group of houses was the Stalin Commune. Inside the largest of these was a row of cots. Each cot, made up, was covered with a single gray blanket. The place was empty except for the cook and a helper in the kitchen making supper. The workers of the Commune would be back from the fields in half an hour, said the cook. We could meet them. We rested ourselves.

Now, at the "Red Star" Commune, of the G.P.U., the workers had come rushing in from work, happy, full of life and energy. But not these men and women. They dragged themselves in sad, hungry, and completely exhausted. They sat at the table like so many mechanical men, not talking to each other, just waiting, each with a tin spoon in his hand, for the cabbage soup to come. A dirty-aproned kitchen girl brought in a trayful of bowls of soup. Hundreds of flies followed her as she deposited each bowl, with a slice of bread, in front of each worker. The soup course was followed by hot tea, without sugar.

They were mostly young people, thin and gaunt. They stared at Maxim and me in silent resentment, I thought, at our presence. The manager came in and sent them back to the fields again. He asked us what we wanted and who gave us permission to come there. I showed him my special documents and told him I was a political refugee. He became almost obsequious. I asked why conditions were so bad on the Commune. He did not agree that they were bad. "We are much better off here than on the collectives," he said. He had been manager of the Commune only a short time. The previous manager had been "removed" for inefficiency. Many of the workers had run away, too.

"Why did they run away?" I asked.

"Because they would rather work in the factories."

"But we don't give them work at the factories! We have enough workers in our factory!" I protested.

"Comrades, that is my answer!"

We left him and talked with a barefoot girl, who straggled behind those walking through the field. "Why do they run away from here?" I repeated the question to her.

"Because there is nothing to eat and too much driving," she offered unhesitatingly. When she found out that I was from America, she wanted to know if America had Communes and if the people there were dying from hunger as the manager had told them. "He said the workers in America live worse than we do. Is this true?"

I couldn't think of any worse food I had consumed in America, save perhaps in one or two of the jails I had been in.

3

In the spring of 1933, when the last of the winter snows had melted away, I made a random visit to a Ukrainian collective near the village of Chekhuyev. In company with a Russian-American comrade from the factory, I took the train from our little station of Lossevo and rode for two hours to Chekhuyev. From this place, we walked east for several miles. We met not a living soul. We came upon a dead horse and a dead man upon the side of a road. The horse still lay harnessed to the wagon. The man was still holding the reins in his lifeless stiff hands. Both had died from starvation, it seemed. The atmosphere itself seemed filled with death and desolation.

The village we reached was the worst of all possible sights. The only human there was an old woman who passed us on the village street. She hobbled along with the aid of a stick. Her clothes were just a bunch of rags tied together. When she came close to us she lifted the stick as if to strike us but the movement petered out in weakness. She spat at us and mumbled something incoherent, something my friend could not make out, though he knew the language well. Her feet were dreadfully swollen. She sat down and pricked her swollen feet with a sharp stick, to let the water out of the huge blisters. There was a large hole in the top of her foot from continuous piercing of the skin. She was stark mad. She laughed when she sat down and screamed with pain when she squeezed her foot. She spat again at us. We moved on.

There was no other life. The village was dead. Going up to one of the shacks, we looked into a window. We saw a dead man propped up on a built-in Russian stove. His back was against the wall, he was rigid and staring straight at us with his faraway dead eyes. I shall always remember that ghastly sight. I have seen dead people who had died naturally, before. But this was from a cause and a definite one. A cause which I was somehow associated with, which I had been supporting. How that deathly gaze pierced me! How it caused me to writhe in mental agony! As I look back, I think that unforgettable scene had more effect than any other in deciding me to do what I could do to rectify my horrible mistake in supporting the Stalinists of Russia and the Third International.

We found more dead people in what had been their homes. Some bodies were decomposed. Others were fresher. When we opened the doors, huge rats would

scamper to their holes and then come out and stare at us.

At one house, there was a sign somehow printed on the door in crude Russian letters. My friend read it: "God bless those who enter here, may they never suffer as we have." Inside two men and a child lay dead with an icon alongside of them.

There was a sign on the door of another house. It read: "My son. We couldn't wait. God be with you." Two old people were dead in there. We took it to mean they couldn't wait for a food package to arrive, possibly from Moscow or even from America. Maybe their son had been in the Red Army; perhaps he was a factory worker. If it was food they had been waiting for, either the boy had not sent it or it had been stolen by some hungry mail-censor.

Many of the houses were empty. But, in the rear, the graves told a story of desolation and ghastly death. More signs were stuck up on these graves by those who buried them:

I LOVE STALIN. BURY HIM HERE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE!
THE COLLECTIVE DIED ON US!
WE TRIED A COLLECTIVE. THIS IS THE RESULT!

I had seen enough of villages and collectives and communes. On our way back, near the station, people told us that *that* village was to be burned. Three or four others in the vicinity had already been burned. Not a trace of the houses or of the dead bodies in them was left. A terrible weight of sadness and hopelessness settled upon me. These horrors could not make me hate the responsible ones any more than I did, but I felt completely helpless about getting out of Russia. And where to go? It would be hard to take up life again in the world outside without helpful friends, and most of

my friends were Communists or Communist sympathizers. They, perhaps, would hate me for upsetting their beliefs and illusions as to Stalin's glorious way out for mankind.

4

I was editor of the American Communist factory paper, *Tempo*, in the Kharkov Tractor Plant. My work often took me into the city of Kharkov ten miles distant. I constantly saw the most unbelievable tragedies. It was common to see people drop dead from starvation. On no occasion that I can remember did I fail to see a death from starvation during my travels to the city.

The Stalin dictatorship has one thing which works in its favor: the horrors of Soviet life are such that few people in the Western World could be brought to believe them. As I am writing this, it all seems like a ghoulish dream. I've never been in an insane asylum, but I should compare my Russian memories to those of a man cured of insanity and trying to recollect the visions of a ghastly past. At the city bazaar I saw a woman lie down and die. Her begging days were over. Wrapped tight around her and hugging her breast was an infant sucking at her nipples. The people about paid little attention.

Death meant freedom! The few who hovered around shook their heads in utmost sorrow. A militiaman blew his whistle and when another came, they both took her body and the suckling to the police station. This police station was crowded all the time with homeless workers and peasants who had been picked up during the day. These were destined to receive a bullet of mercy or to be

shipped in cattle cars to some prison camp. On a visit to Odessa, I saw many such freight cars loaded with these unfortunate people. As they passed our train, I could smell the stench of these cooped-up beings. It was particularly terrible to see young people in these groups. But they were there, along with the old ones.

Once, I saw a lad of about nineteen walking in the gutter. He was smiling and brave-looking, as if he were proud of whatever he had done. Behind him was an officer with a drawn pistol. When an officer parades an individual down a Russian street with a drawn gun, it means *that* person is to be shot. Since capital punishment is reserved for political prisoners, other crimes receiving a maximum of ten years, it meant that the young fellow had committed some political act contrary to the wishes of the rulers. I wanted to cry out to the world: "*Save him! Save him!*" as I had done so many times for Sacco and Vanzetti! I wondered what Vanzetti, a simple noble being, would have said if he had lived to see the Russia of to-day?

Another young man, walking under police escort, but without guns, seized a loaf of bread from a fat woman standing at the curb. The woman, with three round loaves, seemed to be inviting some wretched one to make a pass for that bread. She screamed!

Before the policeman could take the bread from the youth, he had gulped down a few mouthfuls. The cop gave him a terrific shove, but the lad just laughed and laughed, as if to say: "It's in my stomach now, try and get it!"

I yelled: "Good for you, good for you!" The officer looked at me in puzzlement. Fortunately for me, he couldn't understand English.

There is a shallow river running through Kharkov.

So many people jumped into it in attempts to commit suicide that special guards were placed on the river banks to arrest the would-be suicides. On the part of some, it was a trick to get arrested and taken to jail, so that they might get a little to eat, if only a little.

5

In 1933, I had occasion to call on Petrovsky, the President of the Ukrainian Soviet Republic, in his office in Kharkov. I was accompanied by Erenburg, my superior in the cultural-propaganda work at the Tractor Plant. "Comrade Petrovsky," I said, "the men at our factory are saying millions of peasants are dying all over Russia. They see poverty and death all about them. They say that five million people have died this year, and they hold it up to us as a challenge and a mockery. What are we going to tell them?"

"Tell them nothing!" answered President Petrovsky. "What they say is true. We know that millions are dying. That is unfortunate, but the glorious future of the Soviet Union will justify that. Tell them nothing!"

Now the Ukraine is known as the bread-basket of Europe. Its soil is as rich as that of Nebraska, Iowa, and Kansas. That black earth will grow anything, given only the seed and care. What then was the cause of this general starvation? One of the answers is Stalin's forced collectivization. The peasants stubbornly fought the campaign ordered from the Kremlin. Their seeds were confiscated and distributed only to collective and state farms. Their horses and cows were expropriated. The right of disposing of their crops was denied the individual peasants. Farm implements were made unavailable to them. Heavy taxes were placed upon peasant

holdings and collected at the point of a gun. Scores of thousands were killed outright because they refused to go into the collectives. Red Army detachments were sent into the villages for that purpose. The inhabitants of hundreds of villages literally died in their tracks and, in thousands of other villages, the peasants abandoned their homes after the forcible seizure of from 60 to 90 per cent of their grain. Great numbers took to the roads, flocked to the cities, and wandered as far as their legs could carry them. The tragedy of these living corpses, who were often without even the customary rags in the coldest weather, was more gruesome than the tragedy of the dead.

Heart-rending was the condition of the great swarms of homeless children let loose by the Stalin policy. It should be remembered that this new crop of waifs was not inherited from the Tsarist régime, from the early period of the Revolution. The Stalinists have a way of blaming the Tsar and the World War of nearly two decades ago for the latest wave of homeless children. These youngsters hated the Soviet factories, the G.P.U. and all government institutions and restrictions. They preferred to ride freight trains, to beg, to steal. Their parents had been starved to death, shot, sent to concentration camps far away, or were still roaming over the land lost to their children forever. All the stations and railroads of the country were infested with these waifs. They had a way of getting through the cordons of guards despite the vigilance of the G.P.U. officials.

On a trip that I made to Moscow from Kharkov and back, I encountered many little derelicts pleading for food. I was on board the International train and ate in the restaurant car. Across from me sat a characteristic Soviet bureaucrat with shaven head. He carried a brief

case. Into this he put the remains of his meal, such as pieces of bread. Outside the window a dirty-faced kid, wearing a cap much too big for him, appealed to the bureaucrat: "*Dyadya, dai kusok khlieba!*" (Uncle, give me a piece of bread.)

"Go to work. You ought to be arrested for begging!" the bureaucrat said.

I gave the youngster my bread. The bureaucrat, who could speak English, told me that I should not spoil the waifs by giving them food.

"He is too young to work," I answered, estimating the boy's age to be about twelve.

"He could go to a Soviet institution," was the retort.

"But perhaps he does not want to go to an institution," I replied, thinking of the disgraceful Gorky Commune near Kharkov where the children received very little food and plenty of discipline.

"Well, he ought to be made to go! He and the rest are a nuisance to the government!"

Indeed, the more I saw of Russia the more convinced I became that not only the homeless children but all the common people of the country were a nuisance to the Soviet Government.

XXIII. "THIS IS NOT UNION SQUARE!"

1

A MIXED delegation of Americans, Englishmen, and Germans came to Kharkov. The local Intourist office notified us a few hours ahead that the visitors were scheduled to visit our plant and that we should have to serve them a meal at the foreigners' restaurant. Our director, Ravinsky, called for my chief Erenburg. "You and Beal," said Ravinsky to him, "get busy and clean up the place before the delegation arrives."

We had to get in touch with the Communist Party officials to remove the beggars and prepare a grand meal for the visitors. And how our officials like the latter duty! At a given signal, the agents of the G.P.U. and the Communist members, scattered throughout the grounds, pounced upon the weary, almost lifeless people who were either stewing some fish bones or pawing in the garbage for scraps of food. Some of the "beggars" were swaying with the wind beneath apartment windows, crying for bread. The raiders swooped down upon them and forced them in the direction of the corner house, known as A-1, because it was near the road, convenient for transportation.

I watched on the side lines, ashamed of being a party to the system that was murdering these innocent people. Often I thought: "It won't be long, I cannot stand it!" It was horrible to see the starved people dragged along the road, their bare swollen feet scraping against sharp