XIII. Did the First Five Year Plan Succeed?

MOUNTAINS of statistics have been piled up, sorted and resorted, tunneled and dynamited in attempts to ascertain whether the Five Year Plan "succeeded." There is no amateur economist so humble that he has not ventured an analysis. Under the compulsion of my trade, I have myself dabbled in billions and tried to unscramble the many different monetary measures—pre-war rubles, 1926 rubles, "rubles of respective years," etc. I have wondered what to do with clean-cut statistical triumphs which somehow showed up in frightful disaster all around me. I have puzzled over mysterious hiatuses in the official figures and low-quality correctives and sectors of the original Plan which were sunk and forgotten in transit.

In my heart of hearts, I have always felt the futility and the ghoulish cynicism of reducing these years of travail to arithmetic. Fine mathematical successes in agriculture had no place for the famine cadavers, liquidations, death edicts, the conquest and pacification of a hundred million peasants. Try as I would to marshal figures, I could not be thrilled by furnaces and electric stations *per se*, without reference to the human beings who built them and worked in them. The forms of political and economic power, the happiness and dignity of the myriads of men, women and children, outweighed for me those mountains of statistics.

Was the first Five Year Plan a "success"? For whom and for what? Certainly not for the socialist dream, which had been emptied of human meaning in the process, reduced to a mechanical formula of the state as a super-trust and the population as its helpless serfs. Certainly not for the individual worker, whose trade union had been absorbed by the state-employer, who was terrorized by medieval decrees, who had lost even the illusion of a share in regulating his own life. Certainly not for the revolutionary movement of the world, which was splintered, harassed by the growing strength of fascism, weaker and less hopeful than at

the launching of the Plan. Certainly not for the human spirit, mired and outraged by sadistic cruelties on a scale new in modern history, shamed by meekness and sycophancy and systematized hypocrisy.

If industrialization were an end in itself, unrelated to larger human ends, the U.S.S.R. had an astounding amount of physical property to show for its sacrifices. Chimneys had begun to dominate horizons once notable for their church domes. Scores of mammoth new enterprises were erected. A quarter of a million prisoners —a larger number of slaves than the Pharaohs mobilized to build their pyramids, than Peter the Great mobilized to build his new capital—hacked a canal between the White and the Baltic Seas; a hundred thousand survivors of this "success" were digging another canal just outside Moscow as the second Plan got under way. The country possessed 32 blast furnaces and 63 open hearth furnaces that had not existed in 1928, a network of power stations with a capacity four times greater than pre-war Russia had, twice as many oil pipe lines as in 1928. Hundreds of machines and tools formerly imported or unknown in Russia were being manufactured at home and large sections of mining were mechanized for the first time. The foundations were laid for a new industrial empire in the Urals and eastern Siberia, the impregnable heart of the country. Two-thirds of the peasantry and four-fifths of the plowed land were "socialized"—that is, owned and managed by the state-employer as it owned and managed factories and workers. The defensive ability of the country, in a military sense, had been vastly increased, with new mechanical bases for its war industries.

Measured merely for bulk, the Plan achieved much, though it fell far short of the original goals. On the qualitative side, the picture is much less impressive. Here, we find reflected the low caliber of the human material through which the Plan was necessarily translated from paper to life. Overhead costs were greater all along the line than expected—all construction allowed 50% for overhead, compared with 12% allowed in America. Error and spoilage surpassed the worst fears of the Kremlin. A Conference on Quality Production in 1933, for instance, disclosed officially that spoilage in textile mills ranged between 13 and 47%. The productivity of labor did not rise as expected, so that twice

as many men and women as planned had to be drawn from leisure or agriculture to make up the difference. The costs of the Plan, reckoned in any terms, were tragically exorbitant, more so than even the keenest Soviet enemies had prophesied.

These costs were not merely bookkeeping tragedies. They were paid for in hunger, terror, privation, epidemic diseases.

But let us look at the Plan in its most mechanistic aspect.

Speaking at a Party conference in January, Stalin claimed a quantitative fulfillment of 93.7%. The figure—close enough to 100% for all practical purposes—remains the Kremlin's formal estimate of the results.

At the start of the final year, 1932, it was officially announced that the Plan would be carried out fully if a growth of production by 37% were achieved. In point of fact, as Molotov has stated, the growth that year was only 8½%. Simple arithmetic shows that when it requires a 37% increase to finish a job, and only 8½% is attained, the job is no more than 79% complete. This is *prima facie* evidence that Stalin's figure of 93.7 is suspiciously optimistic.

How did he reach that figure? The government's summary showed a gross output for "census industry" in 1932, the last year of the Plan, of 34.3 billion rubles' production in the values of 1926-27. The Plan allegedly called for a total of 36.6 billion rubles in the concluding year. That is where Stalin got his percentage.

But the statistical method involved is open to question. Stalin's figure assumes that the Plan started from scratch and reached 93.7% of what it aimed to accomplish. In sober fact, the Plan started with an output of 15.7 billion rubles in the year preceding its launching. What was actually aimed at was an *increase* of 20.9 billions; the *increase* achieved was 18.6 billions, so that the margin of non-fulfillment was 11%, instead of the 6.3% cited by Stalin.

This statistical method deserves a little consideration, since it is typical of jugglery such as an American income-tax chiseler might well envy. The sleight-of-mind is so deft that I followed this method myself for years, until Zara Witkin, whose engineering mind is proof against statistical magic, pointed it out to me.

Throughout its figures, the Kremlin compares *total results* with the planned totals, instead of comparing the *actual* increase with the *planned* increase. A consideration of the figures for the steel industry, for instance, will illustrate the difference:

Steel output in 1928 was 4.2 million tons. The Plan foresaw an increase of 6.1 millions, for a total of 10.3 millions. Actual production in the final year was 5.9 millions. This meant an increase of 1.7 millions over 1928, or 28% of the increase planned. The Kremlin, however, says: "We aimed at 10.3 and got 5.9, therefore our plan was fulfilled by 57%." On that basis, if production had not increased a single ton, if it had remained at 4.2 millions, the plan would have been carried out by 42%—extraordinary statistical progress while standing still and marking time!

When this cute piece of arithmetical legerdemain is "liquidated," many of the Kremlin's proudest boasts are strangely deflated. Steel output instead of increasing by 57%—in itself a sad failure considering the staggering investments—shows up as only 28%. New housing, with an official credit of 84% increase, actually increased only by 44% (the need for new housing, at the same time, grew by several hundred percent because of the increase of urban workers). The mileage of railroads in operation, instead of reaching 89% of the plan as claimed, showed an increase of only 44%. Petroleum production, manufacture of steam turbines and a very few other items actually exceeded the quantitative totals of increase called for by the Plan. The margins of failure in important branches of national economy may be judged from the following percentages of increase compared with the 100% planned: tractors, 28%; automobiles, 13%; brick, 28%; cement, 37%; lumber, 40%; electrification, 77%.

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It is not without interest that the official Soviet summary of the fulfillment gives no production figures for such important industries as non-ferrous metals (copper, zinc, lead, aluminum), although tremendous amounts of capital had been poured into those industries. It omits output in the textile industry, sugar, rubber shoes, salt and many other branches catering to the every-

day needs of the people. These omissions may reasonably be assumed to reflect a breakdown in those sectors.

The disastrous conditions in transportation and the railway system were not denied by the government spokesmen. But these were the funnels through which the entire industrial program must of necessity filter. The insistence on "success" when transportation has all but collapsed is, to say the least, extraordinary. By a little judicious juggling the impression is created that the very success of the plan, in overtaxing the transport facilities, was to blame. One of the major failures is thus revamped into a counterfeit proof of success. The fact, however, is that transportation was not only badly planned, but even those defective plans were not carried out. The *Piatiletka* called for the completion of 17,000 kilometers of new railway. Only 6,500 kilometers were accomplished. In the ten preceding years, 1918-28, despite civil war and without the bloodshed and ballyhoo of the Five Year Plan, there had been completed 18,500 kilometers, or nearly three times as much as during the Plan.

The failure in steel, cement, lumber and brick is particularly significant. Certainly new construction, the essential factor in the whole Plan, could not go beyond the construction materials available. Stalin's claim of 93.7% fulfillment is illogical and patently "doctored" when the increase in construction materials needed for that fulfillment ranges between 28 and 40%.

The doctoring evidently can be traced to the confusion in ruble values on which Stalin's figure rests. The official publication of the Five Year Plan gave 1928 production in census industry (to which alone Stalin has reference) as 8.1 billion *pre-war* rubles. The equivalent in 1926 rubles is given as 15.7 billions. The government thus recognized the 1926 rubles as about one-half the value of the *pre-war* ruble. The same published Plan gave the planned production for the final year as 21 billion *pre-war* rubles. On the same ratio this would be about 42 billions in 1926-27 rubles. Strangely enough, however, the planned production is set down arbitrarily as 36.6 billions in 1926 values, or some five billions less than it should be according to the government's own valuations.

Reducing the whole business to *pre-war* rubles, in which we are merely following the method of the original Plan, the actual

increase of 18.6 billions in 1926-27 rubles cited by Stalin amounts to 9.3 billions in *pre-war* rubles. This means only 72% of the scheduled growth—a far throw from the 93.7% claimed by Stalin.

Even that figure is vastly inflated, since it takes no cognizance of quality factors, increased cost per unit, inadequate production per man. My personal estimate—and I make no pretensions as an economist—is that the Five Year Plan, in terms of production, was only *half* fulfilled.

Colleagues more qualified to judge statistical mysteries regard that as a conservative estimate. In any event, it is a more responsible figure than Stalin's in relation to the official statistics for available construction materials. It is also more nearly in logical relation to the power resources in actual use. The Plan called for an increase of power by 3.5 million kw. capacity; the actual increase was only 2.7 million kw. or 77%; while there are no reliable statistics as to what portion of this new power capacity was utilized, no competent observer claims that more than three-quarters of it was in use; three-quarters of 77%, the most optimistic reckoning, gives a 58% increase in power—much more nearly in line with a claim of half fulfillment than with Stalin's claim of almost complete fulfillment.

In agriculture—and there is a nauseating cold-bloodedness about measuring the agrarian tragedy statistically—we have the Kremlin's own figure of 699 million centners of grain in 1932, the last year of the Plan. This compares with 801 million centners in 1913 and 733 in 1928. The area under grain increased, but the unit output fell (1913—8.4 centners per hectare; 1932—7 centners per hectare; a decline of about 20%), despite the abolition of the strip system, the staggering cash investments, the immense accretion of farm machinery and the sacrifice of millions of human lives. The tragic failure in the domain of livestock—which can be translated as food, leather, draught power, etc.—was too evident to be denied or juggled arithmetically.

Agriculture, standards of living, housing facilities were as much a part of the Five Year Plan as production in census industry to which Stalin limits himself. When these are considered as part of the whole set-up, when the costs in life and suffering and political terror are added, the Plan must be regarded as one of the most startling failures in all human history. One searches the records

of mankind in vain for a more miserable return on a vast investment.

That the Plan has been accepted even by hostile capitalist economists as on the whole "successful" shows the gullibility and naivete of those who deal in cold figures instead of living realities. Parrotwise the world has repeated rhetorical exaggerations about "decades of industrial progress crowded into a few years"—I shudder to think how much such loose rhetoric I have floated myself!

The second *Piatiletka* was sketched in broad strokes at the same time that the claim of "success" was advanced for the first one. The details were not to be filled in for more than a year; the building was more than a fifth erected before the architects finished the designs. The rough sketch, however, showed clearly enough that there would be no let-up in the killing tempos. Still panting and out of breath from the harrowing effort of the first plan, the Russian people were confronted, early in 1933, with a second and no less strenuous one. The loud official enthusiasm awoke no echoes in the breasts of the masses. They were too intimately aware of the obstacles and sacrifices to be thrilled by the road ahead. But by this time the popular reaction counted for less than ever before: there were harsh decrees, passports, a new concept of factory management, the revivified profit motive to take the place of enthusiasm.

Viewed in sufficient perspective, so that the human factor fades out, the launching of the new plan occurred under propitious circumstances. The high pageant of Soviet economic and social daring was dramatically set off by the world-wide economic crisis. The foreign press and bourgeois economists were too completely demoralized by the ghastly shambles of their own economic scene to be critical of Soviet claims. Soviet leaders were not behindhand in bringing the contrasts home to the humblest of their wards and the most distant of their deaf villages. In the domain of mass propaganda, in forging simple slogans, they have no peers anywhere. Every newspaper and billboard and factory bulletin in the land carried a schematized reminder of capitalist troubles: *Over There* and *Over Here,* with the items listed selected arbitrarily and with small regard for completeness. This international

scoreboard was etched on the consciousness of the Soviet population with all the acids of press, radio, screen and school. The Soviet state was represented as marching forward resolutely while the rest of the world groped through fog banks of depression. The gods who manage such things had provided a setting for the new plan as effective as though made to order for the Kremlin.

But at closer range the moment was not nearly so auspicious. The world crisis itself had had strong repercussions on Moscow's economic plans. It undermined the foreign markets through which Russia must pay for imported machinery, equipment, and brains. If the second Five Year Plan must rely almost entirely on domestic machinery and native brains, it was not altogether a free choice. Despite all its international scoreboards, the U.S.S.R. was as eager to overcome the world depression as any other nation.

Even more important, the concluding year of the first plan had turned out the most difficult. Defects and failures are no less cumulative than successes. Notwithstanding the barrage of alibis (many of them true ones), the ordinary citizen judged the plan just ended in personal terms, in meat and herrings and shoes and personal freedoms rather than in kilowatt-hours or ton-kilometers. His private balance of the plan was not nearly as cheerful as Stalin's.

The resolution on the new plan adopted by the Party conference at which Stalin spoke undertook nothing less than *the actual introduction of socialism.* The first plan, it asserted, had laid the foundations for socialism—the second would erect the final edifice:

> The conference holds that the chief political task of the Second Five Year Plan is to do away with the capitalist elements and with classes in general; to destroy fully the causes giving rise to class distinctions and exploitation; to abolish the survivals of capitalism in economy and in the consciousness of the people; to transform the whole working population of the country into conscious and active builders of a classless society.

Having redefined socialism to mean merely state monopoly of all branches of economy—a feudalistic serf "socialism" undreamed of by socialist theorists and philosophers and agitators

before the Soviet era—Stalin's conference thus attested its impending triumph. In due time it would announce that the triumph was completed.

To explain the palpable failures and hardships despite claims of such towering achievements, Stalin resorted, as usual, to the machinations of foreign and internal enemies. He warned that espionage and sabotage were rife. "A strong and powerful dictatorship of the proletariat," he exclaimed, "that is what we must have now in order to shatter the last remnants of the dying classes and to frustrate their felonious designs." Forgetting utterly that the state was to have evaporated as socialism triumphed, he called for a stronger, more ruthless, more arbitrary state even while announcing the triumph of socialism.

The G.P.U. took up his challenge. Scapegoats were found. Again the arrests were counted by the score and the hundred. In March, thirty-five agrarian specialists, among them high officials of the agricultural commissariat, were shot at one sweep. Posthumous charges even more incredible than those against the forty-eight similarly shot in 1930 were advanced. Perhaps there was an element of truth in these charges, but the accused were safely dead and could not refute them. And on the very day after this wholesale execution which was to symbolize the difficulties in agriculture, half a dozen Englishmen and several dozen Russians were arrested on similar charges in relation to industry. The second plan, like the first, began with a demonstration trial.

XIV. Britishers on Trial

ON MARCH 12, 1933, a "free day" in the Soviet six-day week, Linton Wells, then representing the International News Service, came into exclusive possession of one of the biggest news stories in many a Russian year. Lunching at the British Embassy that day, he learned that six Englishmen, as well as a few dozen Russians, employed by the Metropolitan-Vickers Company on its projects in the U.S.S.R. had been arrested and were being kept incommunicado. They were apparently charged with high crimes against the Soviet state. G.P.U. agents had rounded up the Metro-Vickers people the night before and the Embassy had not as yet been permitted to see any of them. It was the first time since the Shakhty affair in 1928 that a group of foreigners had been arrested and was certain to stir up intense interest throughout the world.

Linton did the most heroic thing that any newspaperman can possibly do—risking life is a minor matter by contrast. He called all the British and American correspondents to his apartment and shared his information with us. We were too excited by the news to be properly grateful. With capital charges facing six foreigners, some of whom were his friends, Linton placed their interests above his own professional glory. Only a reporter can appreciate the mettle of that heroism.

We sent a test dispatch to the home of censor Mironov and apprised him that we would be up to see him with our final stories at a definite hour; this gave him time to check up on the facts. At the appointed hour more than a dozen of us climbed the long flights of stairs and presented our cables.

"I am sorry, gentlemen, very sorry," Mironov smiled the smile that brought his nose within a few centimeters of his protruding chin. "The story can't go. This is, as you know, a free day. We cannot obtain confirmation. As far as I'm concerned, I know nothing about such arrests."

XV. The Press Corps Conceals a Famine

"THERE is no actual starvation or deaths from starvation but there is widespread mortality from diseases due to malnutrition."

This amazing sophistry, culled from a New York *Times* Moscow dispatch on March 30, 1933, has become among foreign reporters the classic example of journalistic understatement. It characterizes sufficiently the whole shabby episode of our failure to report honestly the gruesome Russian famine of 1932-33.

The circumstance that the government barred us from the afflicted regions may serve as our formal excuse. But a deaf-and-dumb reporter hermetically sealed in a hotel room could not have escaped knowledge of the essential facts. Reporting, as we did daily, industrial victories in the Baikal region or Tajikistan without personal investigation, we had small warrant for withholding and minimizing and diluting the famine story because we were prohibited to make personal investigation. Whatever doubts as to the magnitude of the disaster may have lingered in our minds, the prohibition itself should have set at rest.

The episode, indeed, reflects little glory on world journalism as a whole. Not a single American newspaper or press agency protested publicly against the astonishing and almost unprecedented confinement of its correspondent in the Soviet capital or troubled to probe for the causes of this extraordinary measure.

The New York *Times*, as the foremost American newspaper, is automatically selected for investigation in any test of American reporting. But it was certainly not alone in concealing the famine. The precious sentence quoted above was prefaced with its correspondent's celebrated cliche: "To put it brutally—you can't make an omelette without breaking eggs." A later dispatch enlarged upon the masterpiece of understatement and indicated how the eggs were being broken. Asserting that "in some districts and among the large floating population of unskilled labor" there "have been deaths and actual starvation," he catalogued the mala-

dies of malnutrition as "typhus, dysentery, dropsy, and various infantile diseases." The maladies, in short, that always rage in time of famine.

Not until August 23 did the *Times* out of Moscow admit the famine. "It is conservative to suppose," it said, that in certain provinces with a total population of over 40,000,000 mortality has "at least trebled." On this basis, there were two million deaths more than usual. In addition, deaths were also "considerably increased for the Soviet Union as a whole." This dispatch came one day behind an uncensored cable to the New York *Herald Tribune* by Ralph Barnes, in which he placed the deaths in his ultra-conservative fashion at no less than one million. The Barnes story was front-paged and the *Times* could no longer ignore the subject. Its own admission followed, raising Barnes' ante. By a singular twist of logic, the *Times* story introduced the admission of famine with this remarkable statement:

> Any report of a famine in Russia is today an exaggeration or malignant propaganda. The food shortage which has affected almost the whole population in the last year and particularly in the grain-producing provinces—the Ukraine, North Caucasus, the lower Volga region—has, however, caused heavy loss of life.

The dividing line between "heavy loss of life" through food shortage and "famine" is rather tenuous. Such verbal finessing made little difference to the millions of dead and dying, to the refugees who knocked at our doors begging bread, to the lines of ragged peasants stretching from Torgsin doors in the famine area waiting to exchange their wedding rings and silver trinkets for bread.

These philological sophistries, to which we were all driven, served Moscow's purpose of smearing the facts out of recognition and beclouding a situation which, had we reported it simply and clearly, might have worked up enough public opinion abroad to force remedial measures. And every correspondent, each in his own measure, was guilty of collaborating in this monstrous hoax on the world. Maurice Hindus, though among the most industrious apologists for Stalin, was kept waiting nearly a month for a visa during the famine and finally was admitted on condition that he should not go outside of Moscow. During his 1933 visit,

therefore, he did not go to his native village as in the past. In his books, articles and lectures, curiously, he does not allude to that enforced omission and its causes.

The very next day after the *Times'* half-hearted admission from Moscow, its representative in Berlin, Frederick T. Birchall, talked to a group of foreigners just returned from the famine territory, among them a reputable American. "The revelations of what they have seen in the last few weeks," Birchall cabled, "indicate that the recent estimate of four million deaths due indirectly to malnutrition in agricultural Russia in recent months may be rather an understatement than an exaggeration." The word "malnutrition" had, by dint of repetition, taken hold even outside Russia—a clean triumph for planned censorship.

All of us had talked with people just returned from the famine regions. Jack Calder, as honest a man as ever drew a Soviet paycheck, returned from a long tour of Kazakstan with stories to curdle one's blood. Perched on a high stool at the Metropole valuta bar, we listened to his graphic description of Kazakstan roads lined with stiff corpses like so many logs. Most of us saw the pictures taken by German consular officials in the Ukraine showing scenes of horror reminiscent of the Volga famine of 1921. Few of us were so completely isolated that we did not meet Russians whose work took them to the devastated areas, or Muscovites with relatives in those areas. Around every railroad station in the capital hundreds of bedraggled refugees were encamped, had we needed further corroboration; they gathered faster than the police could clear them away.

The truth is that we did not seek corroboration for the simple reason that we entertained no doubts on the subject. There are facts too large to require eyewitness confirmation—facts so pervasive and generally accepted that confirmation would be futile pedantry. There was no more need for investigation to establish the mere existence of the Russian famine than investigation to establish the existence of the American depression. Inside Russia the matter was not disputed. The famine was accepted as a matter of course in our casual conversation at the hotels and in our homes. In the foreign colony estimates of famine deaths ranged from one million up; among Russians from three millions up. Russians, especially communists, were inclined to cite higher figures through

a sort of perverse pride in bigness; if it called for Bolshevik firmness to let a million die, it obviously called for three times as much firmness to kill off three million. . . .

The first reliable report of the Russian famine was given to the world by an English journalist, a certain Gareth Jones, at one time secretary to Lloyd George. Jones had a conscientious streak in his make-up which took him on a secret journey into the Ukraine and a brief walking tour through its countryside. That same streak was to take him a few years later into the interior of China during political disturbances, and was to cost him his life at the hands of Chinese military bandits. An earnest and meticulous little man, Gareth Jones was the sort who carries a note-book and unashamedly records your words as you talk. Patiently he went from one correspondent to the next, asking questions and writing down the answers.

On emerging from Russia, Jones made a statement which, startling though it sounded, was little more than a summary of what the correspondents and foreign diplomats had told him. To protect us, and perhaps with some idea of heightening the authenticity of his reports, he emphasized his Ukrainian foray rather than our conversation as the chief source of his information.

In any case, we all received urgent queries from our home offices on the subject. But the inquiries coincided with preparations under way for the trial of the British engineers. The need to remain on friendly terms with the censors at least for the duration of the trial was for all of us a compelling professional necessity.

Throwing down Jones was as unpleasant a chore as fell to any of us in years of juggling facts to please dictatorial regimes—but throw him down we did, unanimously and in almost identical formulas of equivocation. Poor Gareth Jones must have been the most surprised human being alive when the facts he so painstakingly garnered from our mouths were snowed under by our denials.

The scene in which the American press corps combined to repudiate Jones is fresh in my mind. It was in the evening and Comrade Umansky, the soul of graciousness, consented to meet us in the hotel room of a correspondent. He knew that he had a strategic advantage over us because of the Metro-Vickers story. He could afford to be gracious. Forced by competitive journalism to

jockey for the inside track with officials, it would have been professional suicide to make an issue of the famine at this particular time. There was much bargaining in a spirit of gentlemanly give-and-take, under the effulgence of Umansky's gilded smile, before a formula of denial was worked out.

We admitted enough to soothe our consciences, but in roundabout phrases that damned Jones as a liar. The filthy business having been disposed of, someone ordered vodka and *zakuski*, Umansky joined the celebration, and the party did not break up until the early morning hours. The head censor was in a mellower mood than I had ever seen him before or since. He had done a big bit for Bolshevik firmness that night.

We were summoned to the Press Department one by one and instructed not to venture out of Moscow without submitting a detailed itinerary and having it officially sanctioned. In effect, therefore, we were summarily deprived of the right of unhampered travel in the country to which we were accredited.

"This is nothing new," Umansky grimaced uncomfortably. "Such a rule has been in existence since the beginning of the revolution. Now we have decided to enforce it."

New or old, such a rule had not been invoked since the civil war days. It was forgotten again when the famine was ended. Its undisguised purpose was to keep us out of the stricken regions. The same department which daily issued denials of the famine now acted to prevent us from seeing that famine with our own eyes. Our brief cables about this desperate measure of concealment were published, if at all, in some obscure corner of the paper. The world press accepted with complete equanimity the virtual expulsion of all its representatives from all of Russia except Moscow. It agreed without protest to a partnership in the macabre hoax.

Other steps were taken to prevent prying. Until then, foreigners arriving at the frontier received their passports as soon as the train got under way. Now the passports were retained by the authorities until just before the train pulled into Moscow—thus guaranteeing that no foreigner would drop off en route for unchaperoned research.

When M. Herriot, the liberal French statesman, arrived in Russia at Odessa, the one French correspondent in the country,

M. Lusiani, demanded the right to meet him. The Press Department finally gave its permission—on Lusiani's solemn undertaking to remain with the official party and not to stray into the countryside. M. Herriot, conducted along the prescribed road between Odessa and Moscow, completely surrounded by high functionaries, was able to say honestly when he returned to Paris that he had not personally seen any famine. Neither had Lusiani.

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I was not the first Moscow observer to remark that God seems to be on the side of the atheists. What the Kremlin would have prayed for, had it believed in prayer, was perfect weather, and that is what it received that spring and summer: perfect weather and bumper crops. The fields had been planted under the aegis of the newly established *Politotdyels* (Political Departments) with unlimited authority over the peasants. Food rations barely sufficient to sustain life had been distributed only to those actually at work in the fields. Red Army detachments in many places had been employed to guard seed and to prevent hungry peasants from devouring the green shoots of the new harvest. In the midst of the famine, the planting proceeded, and the crops came up strong and plenteous. The dead were buried—for the living there would be bread enough and to spare in the following winter.

Belatedly the world had awakened to the famine situation. We were able to write honestly that "to speak of famine *now* is ridiculous." We did not always bother to add that we had failed to speak of it or at best mumbled incomprehensibly *then*, when it was not ridiculous. Cardinal Innitzer, Archbishop of Vienna, made the first of his sensational statements about Soviet agrarian conditions on August 20, when those conditions were already being mitigated. Certain anti-Soviet newspapers in England and America began to write about the famine at about the time it was ended, and continued to write about it long after it had become history: their facts were on the whole correct, but their tenses were badly mixed. The most rigorous censorship in all of Soviet Russia's history had been successful—it had concealed the catastrophe until it was ended, thereby bringing confusion, doubt, contradiction into the whole subject. Years after the event—when no Russian com-

munist in his senses any longer concealed the magnitude of the famine—the question whether there had been a famine at all was still being disputed in the outside world!

In the autumn, the Soviet press was exultant. Lazar Kaganovich was given most of the credit for the successful harvest. It was his mind that invented the Political Departments to lead collectivized agriculture, his iron hand that applied Bolshevik mercilessness. Now that a healing flood of grain was inundating the famished land, the secrecy gradually gave way. Increasingly with every passing month Russian officials ceased to deny the obvious. Soviet journalists who had been in the afflicted areas now told me personally such details of the tragedy as not even the eager imaginations of Riga and Warsaw journalists had been able to project. They were able to speak in the past tense, so that their accents were proud boasts rather than admissions.

The Kremlin, in short, had "gotten away with it." At a cost in millions of lives, through the instrumentalities of hunger and terror, socialized agriculture had been made to yield an excellent harvest. Certain observers now insisted in print that the efficacy of collectivization had been demonstrated; nothing, of course, had been demonstrated except the efficacy of concentrated force used against a population demoralized by protracted hunger.

There were few peasant homes in the worst of the famine districts which had not paid a toll in life for this harvest. In hundreds of villages half the population was gone: some had been killed by the "diseases of malnutrition" and others had fled to seek food. In September and October, Chamberlin, Duranty, and others who visited southern Russia still found half-deserted villages. It would be years before the memory of this fearful time would lose its poignancy in the Ukraine and North Caucasus, in Kazakstan and Lower Volga. And there were those who believed, as I did, that the memory was indelible and would rise to plague those who had decided in cold blood to let the villages starve. But in the cities, at least, a new optimism was born.

The attitude of the professional friends of the U.S.S.R. on the famine went through a curious cycle. First, while the disaster was under way, they made furious denials. Since then, they have tended to admit the facts but to explain them away as unavoidable, and as a just and proper punishment meted out to a "rebellious" peasantry. "Why harp on something that is by now history?" sums up their reproachful objection to a reminder of the period. But all great social crimes, given time, become history. By that fantastic logic, time has wiped out the guilt of those who perpetrated the Inquisition and the St. Bartholomew's Night massacres, the World War and the fascist destruction of Vienna's socialist housing, the Reichstag fire and the fascist attack on democratic government in Spain. The Kremlin had foreseen the famine and permitted it to run its course of death and horror for political reasons. The philosophy which made such a decision possible, the mad arrogance of rulers condemning millions to death, are not justified by the fact that the dead are buried and the survivors being fed.

How many millions actually died will never be known accurately. It is not generally understood abroad that the Soviet government *stopped the publication of vital statistics for the period in question*, although such statistics were published as a matter of routine in previous years; otherwise it would be a simple matter to compare the death-rate for the winter and spring of 1932-33 with the normal death-rate.

Estimates made by foreigners and Russians range from three to seven millions. Chamberlin, after his journey through the devastated districts, described in detail in his *Russia's Iron Age*, placed the cost in life at four million. Duranty, after a similar journey, withdrew his previous estimate that the death-rate had increased threefold as far as the North Caucasus was concerned but stated that "he is inclined to believe that the estimate he made for the Ukraine was too low." A more than trebled death-rate in the Ukraine would bring the famine deaths in that one area alone to a million and a half. Maurice Hindus, after years of vagueness on the subject, finally settled on "at least three million" as his estimate.

Southern Russia, after many months of total news blockade, was opened to foreign correspondents in easy stages. The first to be given permission to travel in the forbidden zones were the technically "friendly" reporters, whose dispatches might be counted upon to take the sting out of anything subsequent travelers might report. Duranty, for instance, was given a two weeks' advantage over most of us. On the day he returned, it happened, Billy and I were dining with Anne O'Hare McCormick, roving correspon-

dent for the New York *Times*, and her husband. Duranty joined us. He gave us his fresh impressions in brutally frank terms and they added up to a picture of ghastly horror. His estimate of the dead from famine was the most startling I had as yet heard from anyone.

"But, Walter, you don't mean that literally?" Mrs. McCormick exclaimed.

"Hell I don't. . . . I'm being conservative," he replied, and as if by way of consolation he added his famous truism: "But they're only Russians. . . ."

Once more the same evening we heard Duranty make the same estimate, in answer to a question by Laurence Stallings, at the railroad station, just as the train was pulling out for the Polish frontier. When the issues of the *Times* carrying Duranty's own articles reached me I found that they failed to mention the large figures he had given freely and repeatedly to all of us.

XVI. Forebodings

LIKE the proverbial candle about to expire, my reputation in official eyes flared up again brightly before it was snuffed out utterly. My attitude toward the trial of the Britons threatened briefly to restore me to the good graces of the Soviet powers. Almost alone among the Anglo-American reporters I had taken an undeviating stand on the right of the Soviet government to try foreigners accused of crimes within its frontiers. London's peremptory demands for immediate surrender of its citizens seemed to me to smack of extraterritoriality. The trial itself, at least as far as it applied to the accused foreigners, seemed to me a closer approximation of justice than any previous demonstration trial.

Outwardly correct, the British Embassy crowd soon made me feel that my point of view was not to its liking. Certain of the Embassy officials were outspoken in their criticism of my dispatches, which were being widely used throughout the British Empire. I was permitted to attend the general press conferences but carefully excluded from the more intimate Embassy gatherings. I was never invited, for instance, to lunch with the defendants between sessions as were several other Americans and all the British reporters.

Soon after the trial, several communist friends brought me the same message in almost the same words. Government circles, they said in mysterious undertones, were fully cognizant of the British hostility toward me and greatly impressed with my handling of the trial. Comrade Umansky himself began to look at me less venomously. Everyone was in a mood to forgive past recalcitrance; they were only watching to see whether the change was permanent or a passing whim.

Let no one suppose that official favor is a small thing in the atmosphere of an authoritarian state. In a hundred ways life becomes simplified, mellowed, warmed by an inner sense of strength. Over and above the physical and professional advantages is the